

## TEACHING ENGLISH TODAY

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# TEACHING ENGLISH TODAY

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Houghton Mifflin Company  
Boston                      Atlanta  
Hopewell, New Jersey

Dallas  
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Geneva, Illinois  
London

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Printed in the U S A

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 74-19661

ISBN 0-395-18616-1

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# PREFACE

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It was the best of times it was the worst of times it was the age of wisdom it was the age of foolishness

Dickens opening of *A Tale of Two Cities* seems applicable to 1973 and 1974 in general and to the educational scene in particular. To writers of textbooks on the teaching of English it was the worst of times in the face of a national oversupply of secondary school teachers of English enrollments in undergraduate courses in English education declined sharply in most colleges and universities. It may have been the best of times however in encouraging continued or in service education of English teachers. There was a growing tendency to view teacher certification as the first level of the education of the English teacher and professional groups of teachers supervisors and local school districts greatly increased efforts to provide on the job opportunities for professional improvement. This latter trend encouraged the authors of this book to make this text fully usable for both pre service and in service teachers of English.

Whether our time is an age of wisdom or of foolishness in relation to the teaching of English depends of course on one's vantage point. Certainly the period in which this textbook was prepared demanded greater wisdom and sensitivity (and at the same time offered greater opportunities for foolishness and failure) than that of the 1950s or 1960s because of the conflict between the professions' attempt to develop more relevant programs than the elitist trends of the past and the strict requirements for what is accomplished in English classes. A general theme of this book is that the two pressures need not create a hopeless dilemma although the difficulty of responding to both and of bringing the two into harmony has forced some teachers of English to adopt one of the two extremes as a protective device. In the hands of those perhaps too euphorically moved by the challenge of relevance the English course may have reverted to a rather structureless mixture of pop culture sensitivity experiments or electronic cybernetics. Those teachers overawed by demands for accountability may have retreated to a regimen of fundamentals, the outcome of which can be readily measured. These are extremes but despite the turmoil of recent years in the profession significant

progress has been made in designing and delivering balanced instruction in English, and hopefully this book reflects that progress.

If there is one word that the authors hope—fatuously or otherwise—that others will use to label this book, that word is “responsible.” Though the book obviously reflects our interests and biases, these are not the basis of the book. Our attempt to provide material that will form a valid foundation for decision-making in the teaching of English is the base. The material in the text along with that in the suggested bibliographies is designed to make possible a balanced weighing of alternatives that should be, in our view, the major thrust when pre-service or in-service teachers come together to consider the teaching of English in the secondary school.

In an age of model- and systems-building, we cannot propose one model or system for the teaching of English through the content and organization of the text. In planning the book, we sought an ordering of the content that would be as clear and as easily assimilated as possible. The general organization as well as the linear arrangement of the content is not intended to suggest a specific philosophical approach, nor is the organization of the book necessarily meant to suggest a pattern for courses in the teaching of English.

In developing this text, one area of decision appeared over and over. The problem: should the teacher of English be referred to as “he” or “she”? We decided that grammatically the generic “he” is still valid because the English language offers no alternative (except the almost equally offensive passive voice). Our usage is not intended to favor either side of the sexism discussion.

Most prefaces to books acknowledge and thank, but we found that the list of individuals we would choose would be far too lengthy. Our thanks, then, go out to the many students we have taught in high school, undergraduate, and graduate courses, and to the profession which has been as rewarding to each of us as we hope it will be to those who will use the book.

## TEACHING ENGLISH TODAY



# THE ENGLISH TEACHER TODAY

As the door closed on her departing husband Sharon Helper glanced at the clock on the kitchen wall and hastily stacked the breakfast dishes in the sink. Then gathering up purse, car keys and the folder of pictures she had gathered for a bulletin board display on mythology the current unit in her eighth grade classes she headed for the door.

As she stepped out of her car in the faculty parking lot at the Jordan Junior High School she sniffed the mild May air and thought 'Just three more weeks and I'll have finished my first year of teaching. Where has the time gone?' She entered the school loud with voices and banging locker doors and headed into the main office to check her mailbox. The usual line of pupils with excuses for absence were pressed against the counter in front of one of the school secretaries. From the line one called 'Hi Mrs Helper. Like that dress!'

Flowers of spring, Judy. Sharon called back. Glad to see you're back.

Sharon riffled through the contents of her mailbox: the May copy of the *English Journal*—aha an article on literature in the junior high school—two or three ads from textbook companies; a notice of next week's final meeting of the local council of teachers of English; a stuffy memo from the audio-visual coordinator that films had to be ordered four days in advance instead of three; a list of members of the track team excused all day for an away meet; a reminder that the Hae W Club of which Sharon was faculty advisor would meet at 7:00 p.m. that night to plan the spring picnic. Oh I forgot that! Sharon thought with a sigh.

When Sharon arrived at her second floor room just before the homeroom bell she found none to her surprise that Jerry and Roger were blocking the door and intently whacking each other over the

head with rolled newspapers 'Okay, Jerry, Roger, get into your seats "

As the usual list of homeroom announcements came from the loudspeaker, Sharon reviewed her plans for the first period. The first part would be a video taping of a small-group discussion of monsters in mythology. Sharon glanced at the equipment, hoping that her teacher aide, who had the day off, had set it up correctly. She had. The taping went smoothly and the subsequent discussion was spirited.

The second period seventh-grade class was working in small groups preparing reports on the novels each group had read. There were the usual minor crises in getting started: one group was missing two members who were on the track team, two members of another had forgotten their books, group three wanted to know if it could give its report last, and gave many reasons for slow progress. But the groups settled into a hum of activity, with Sharon going from one group to another offering suggestions and asking questions.

When the period ended, Sharon headed for the room used for large-group instruction where a mixed class of low ability seventh and eighth graders were to see the film, *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*. Sharon was one of a team of three teachers who taught the class. Although she enjoyed the team teaching, she frequently disagreed with Frank Olds, one of the other team members, on what should be emphasized with such pupils, and she sometimes found it hard to restrain her impatience over what she considered to be his concern with trivialities.

The film was well received and Sharon rejoiced, hoping that the discussion she was to lead the next day might be fruitful. As she was leaving the room at the end of the period, a shy pupil approached, offering Sharon a sheaf of papers. "I wrote a story. Maybe you like to read it."

Sharon tried to cover her astonishment. Six or seven scribbled pages! Myrna hadn't been able to write more than two or three sentences at any one time all year.

"It about something happen in my family," Myrna explained in a low voice.

'Why thank you, Myrna, I'll be delighted to read this!' Sharon answered, as Myrna retreated hastily.

At that point Frank Olds stopped beside Sharon. "Look, Frank," Sharon said, "a short story from Myrna Anderson!"

'Great!' he replied. 'But no doubt half the words are misspelled.'

"Probably. But right now that doesn't matter."

'Doesn't matter to you, Sharon. As a matter of fact, I think we should cut this unit short so that we can have time to give the kids a thorough review of fundamentals before the end of the year. I've worked out some new drills on sentence diagramming, spelling, and punctuation.'

"Here we go again!" Sharon thought "Well, let's talk it over at our regular team meeting tomorrow"

She hurried back to her room. Fourth period was her planning period, and she wanted to get her bulletin board display set up. She was in the midst of pinning up pictures when Gloria Summers, one of the other English teachers, burst in. "Oh, I just had the most wonderful class, Sharon. The kids finished their collages, and they were wonderful!"

"Good! What were they on?"

"Oh, I let the kids do anything they wanted. I don't know what some of them are supposed to represent, but they're really creative. Tomorrow we're going to have the Rock Breakers come in to play all period—free!"

"What's the unit, Gloria?"

"Oh, there's no special unit or anything. I'm just doing some things the kids will enjoy. Great for the end of the year. See ya!"

Sharon finished the display and, since she still had a half hour before the next class, decided to go down to the teachers' lounge to get a cup of coffee and read her new *English Journal*.

In the lounge, Sharon saw Mrs. Moss, one of the older English teachers. "Hi, Sharon. Well, are you meeting the organized resistance successfully today?"

Sharon laughed. "Oh, the resistance hasn't been so bad so far."

Mrs. Moss glanced at Sharon's copy of the *English Journal*. "I see you're catching up on your professional reading."

"Yeah. It just came."

"Well, dear, after a year or two in this business you'll ignore that stuff. Theories! Theories!"

"Oh, I get some good ideas once in a while," Sharon said, laughing.

"Well, honey, you do your thing and I'll do mine, and the little beasts won't learn a thing either way! God, I'm glad it's almost the end of the year. I've got it made for the rest of the time, though. I've got the kids working on some kind of individual packets someone ordered and didn't use. They probably won't learn much, but they're quiet and in their seats, and that's something!"

"You're a gem, Mrs. M," Sharon answered.

## THE ENGLISH TEACHER AS PROFESSIONAL

Our first-year teacher is well into another teaching day.

Although the sketch you have just read can't be billed as "typical" (though it may be typical for Sharon at Jordan Junior High) because teaching assignments and conditions vary so greatly from one school system to another, some of the demands and rewards of teaching English are illustrated. One thing should be clear: Teaching English is challenging. Meeting four or five (or sometimes six) groups of

students each day or sharing in the team teaching of two or three classes plus planning meetings and other school duties is demanding

Challenge and problems yes but the rewards are there too the friendship and respect of students the satisfaction of conducting a good class the thrill of reaching a particular student the challenge of providing one part of a young person's educational foundation

**PROFESSIONAL IRRESPONSIBILITY** You undoubtedly noted the contrast between Sharon and the three teachers she talks with during the morning Each of the three characterizes a type of professional irresponsibility Examining each a little more closely may help to define the ideal English teacher or at least may suggest some of the characteristics of the truly professional English teacher

Mr Olds can be characterized as the service station operator He is committed to teaching English but his notion of the scope of the subject is dwarfed To him mechanical skills—spelling punctuation and sentence structure—are the all important keys to good style and language use Drill is revered

Gloria Summers is an entertainer Anything goes if the students like it Although there are good elements in her approach she can still be called partially irresponsible professionally She works hard to bring gut level elements of youth culture into the classroom but often becomes overconcerned with passing and insignificant student interests She and teachers like her need to develop a coherent rationale for what they want in their classes and to organize carefully

Mrs Moss is the shopkeeper To keep the students quiet and in their seats is what she most desires New ideas? Ho hum Research? Ignored She has no professional commitment and no real goals but instead follows the path of least resistance To her taking roll appears as important as teaching literature She lives by clichés Most kids won't learn the important things in English young people are going to the dogs The only hope for her teaching is to provide reasonably sound more or less teacher proof materials and procedures

**INGREDIENTS OF PROFESSIONALISM** The criticism that has just been leveled seems to imply that its reverse will supply a neat definition of the truly professional English teacher However it isn't that easy Professionalism is an amorphous term and successful teachers bring a variety of personalities and teaching styles to their work It is possible though to identify a few general qualities that characterize both professional English teachers and professional teachers in other fields

**Broad preparation in English** Such preparation encompasses familiarity with both juvenile and adult printed and audio visual literature language skills and oral and written communication

**Understanding young people** Understanding implies a knowledge of the interests traits and problems of adolescents as well as sympathy for their foibles developed through experience and course work in such fields as human growth and development

**Skill in using teaching techniques and materials** Again the successful teacher has a repertoire of teaching techniques and strategies and a broad knowledge of teaching tools and materials gained through training and experience An important facet of teaching skill is the ability to relate techniques and materials to specific objectives An other facet is flexibility the ability to change horses when the stream warrants and to take advantage of unexpected educational opportunities

**Organization** Teaching several classes each day demands organization on the part of the teacher Although flexibility is prized effective planning is essential

**Participation in professional activities** Education and training never end for the professional teacher He must read journals join organizations of teachers of English and attend their meetings and take advantage of opportunities for in service education In teaching as in most other walks of life change is inevitable Adapting to change and constantly re honing skill and understanding are demands the professional teacher cannot evade

Although these ingredients of professionalism are valid they represent a kind of dry bones catalog Perhaps a richer feeling for how these ingredients blend in the effective English teacher today is captured in the following statements of English teachers and educators<sup>1</sup>

#### WE NEED TEACHERS WHO ACCEPT KIDS

If I had one wish for something new really new in the English curriculum this would be ALL (i.e. 100% of them) English teachers who accept students as human beings with their individual knowledge and skills and smells and language who know something about the teaching of reading who have an extensive background in all the areas—especially the new ones—of linguistics who know and adore poets especially some contemporary ones who can work with whole classes of kids whole large classes of kids small groups of kids and individual kids—not to mention working with fellow teachers who are clever and imaginative who can comfortably change their teaching methods their class schedules their room arrangements and their hair appointments who can see recent movies who readreadread (Dorothy Olson Lincoln Nebraska Public Schools)

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from If I Had One Wish for Something New Really New in the English Curriculum This is What It Would Be—A Symposium Arizona English Bulletin 15 (April 1973) 91-95

## WE NEED TEACHERS WHO CARE ABOUT KIDS

A teacher with partial amnesia—unable to remember the way it's spozed to be or hear haunting voices of past teachers doing grammar drills lecturing on the shape of the Shakespearean stage or giving a theme assignment to write *What I Did on My Summer Vacation*. Duty responsibility dedication and work for a grade replaced in his vocabulary by joy honesty, experience, and rigor with a purpose. No scowling figure red pencil behind his ear, back bent from a perpetually over loaded briefcase, but a lilt in his voice a spring in his step and an adolescent novel a word game a movie reel tucked between the classics in his knapsack. A man pursuing life literature kids and their connective links (Lou Willett Stanek Assistant English MAT Coordinator University of Chicago)

## WE NEED TEACHERS WHO MEASURE WHAT THEY TEACH

A much closer fit between the reasons we give our students (and ourselves) for teaching and learning English and the methods and measurements we bring to the evaluation of teaching and learning. I think there's something fundamentally honest about the teacher who says that the thing in English is to master standard written English and then who tests children on matters like subject verb agreement. I don't feel that way about the teacher who says the thing in English is to experience the wonder of language and to increase power over it and who even provides some classroom experiences which might lead to wonder or power or both, but who in the last analysis grades on subject verb agreement. Nor for that matter am I much excited about the teacher who promises improved skills but never gets around to finding out if the skills have improved. That's what I think I want: some logical and pedagogical fit between what we say is important and what we reveal by our evaluation that we think is important. (Bob Hogan Executive Secretary, NCTE)

## WE NEED TEACHERS WHO DO WHAT THEY EXPECT KIDS TO DO

An English teacher who reads a minimum of 52 books a year—two thirds adult literature and one third adolescent or children's literature and exchanges views and opinions on those books with colleagues. An English teacher who keeps a daily journal and completes at least 12 pieces of public writing each year. One half of these pieces would be exchanged with colleagues and one half would be submitted for publication. Without English teachers who regularly read and write and talk about their reading and writing with their peers and students little which is either really new or lasting will happen in English classrooms. Without a changiog and

"doing" teacher the chances for changing and 'doing' classrooms is severely limited (Tom Barton Washington State University)

## THE CONTEXT FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TODAY

Recent change in the teaching of English has been represented by four major movements: curriculum content; rebellion against the "cells and bells" system for bringing students and teachers together, materials packaging, and the battle of accountability

**CURRICULUM CONTENT MOVEMENT** Triggered by general dissatisfaction with the chaotic and cluttered state of the English curriculum, the thrust has been toward defining the content of English and building subject matter sequences. The content of English programs still varies from school to school, of course, but generally it has been defined as the study of literature in print and non print forms, of the English language, and of oral and written communication. A more detailed discussion of these trends follows later in the chapter

**REBELLION AGAINST "CELLS AND BELLS" SCHEDULING** This rebellion grew out of the realization that there is nothing sacrosanct about traditional scheduling: classifying students into grades, scheduling them in groups for five periods per week, and assigning to them a single teacher for a semester or school year. The break from this tradition has taken several forms: team teaching often featuring combined small-group, large group instruction; flexible scheduling allowing a given class to have different modules of time allotted to it on a weekly or monthly basis; individualized non graded instructional plans of various kinds. Perhaps the most popular curriculum trend is toward the short-term electives plan. Here, the traditional sequence of year-long English courses gives way to shorter-term more specialized courses similar in plan to those of colleges and universities. Designed for students of differing abilities, motivations, and interests, courses or "mini courses" may vary in length from a few weeks to a semester and may be organized around strands of the curriculum—literature, writing, drama, language—aspects of these strands—black literature, dialects, or recent American poetry—or themes such as the supernatural in recent fiction.

**MATERIALS REVOLUTION** Radical changes in curriculum patterns, of course, have forced drastic changes in teaching materials. If not gone already, the day when the English program depended on one hardbound book for literature and one for composition has nearly passed. The supremacy of packaged materials designed for specific purposes and groups or individuals characterizes the revolution. Most

materials use several media and may include recordings tapes cassettes slides and transparencies along with books Although in some states materials are adopted on a statewide basis and decisions are usually made by teacher committees in other states individual schools may select their own materials Keeping reasonably abreast of teaching materials becomes one of the important—and time consuming—jobs of the teacher

**BATTLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY** In recent years the public demand for specific evidence of what teachers are accomplishing has sharpened greatly In fact by the time this book is used the battle of accountability may be over and teacher accountability may be here to stay The education profession generally has cast accountability in terms of behavioral objectives Teachers of English oriented to long range sometimes amorphous goals have been generally antagonistic to this trend Nonetheless whatever the English teacher's attitude toward behavioral objectives may be he does have an obligation to devise methods of evaluating students progress toward the objectives he sets

## SOME RECENT EMPHASES IN THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

As the movement to define the content of English has continued some trends have emerged which are identified below These trends will then get detailed treatment in later chapters

**GREATER VIRILITY FOR LITERATURE STUDY** Perhaps paralleling the greater permissiveness in movie and television fare the taboos that have long dogged school literature programs have been relaxed in recent years A recent president of the National Council of Teachers of English declared that the literature curriculum should be open to books of a great variety of values and visions including those that rub against the grain of society that counter prevailing values as they are either preached or practiced <sup>2</sup>

The effort to put more impact into the study of literature and to provide an opportunity for a full bodied literary experience has resulted too in less emphasis on traditional literary analysis and more on emotional and intellectual reader involvement and response

**RHETORIC AS CONTEXT FOR TEACHING COMPOSITION** The revival of rhetoric and the new rhetoric are terms widely used by teachers of English What is being revived are rhetorical theories of

<sup>2</sup> James E. Miller Literature in the Revitalized Curriculum *Bulletin of the NASSP* 51 (April 1967) 27



earlier times particularly of the ancient classical period. What is new is the borrowing from logic semantics linguistics and other disciplines. It is impossible to define any single new rhetoric. J. N. Hook's definition of rhetoric as "the planned use of language for a preconceived purpose"<sup>3</sup> seems a useful one.

The main effect of modern rhetorical theory on teachers has been to direct their attention to its structure—invention arrangement and style—as a context for teaching composition. Thus teachers give more emphasis to the psychological aspects of writing such as consideration of voice tone and attitude.

**BROADENED LANGUAGE STUDY** In recent years the language strand of the English curriculum has provoked much argument and a great deal of curriculum experimentation. Although approaches to language study generally and the hoary problems of grammar and usage specifically vary widely, it is safe to say that the study of the English language has broadened considerably in recent years. Until a few years ago, in most schools language study meant traditional grammar, concern with correctness or more recently appropriateness in usage, and a greater or lesser concern with the mechanics of writing—spelling capitalization and punctuation. Now it is not uncommon to find attention focused on a number of other aspects of language study such as the nature of language semantics English language history transformational grammar dialects and language variation lexicography and phonology. Experimentation with these facets of language has been accelerated by the short-term electives curriculum model into which various aspects of language study fit neatly as courses of a semester or less in length.

**EMPHASIS ON ORAL LANGUAGE AND DRAMA** The curious long-standing neglect of oral language in secondary school classrooms apparently is being remedied in a number of schools. The term *oracy* has come into the professional vocabulary as a parallel to literacy, and the importance of talk is being underscored by educators here and in England. Many teachers have become especially interested in the value of dramatic activities such as improvisation and readers theater.

**STUDY AND USE OF NON-PRINT MEDIA** English teachers like teachers of other subjects now have the opportunity to use a wide variety of electronic aids—films tapes slides cassettes kinescopes transparencies—to support their teaching and make it more effective.

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3. Logic Grammar Rhetoric: A Presumptuous Essay on Their Relationships, *English Journal* 35 (April 1966): 471.

Learning to use electronic hardware is a must for the prospective teacher today. Non-print media are more effective than printed media in imparting some content and in meeting some objectives in English instruction. Another facet of the increased emphasis on non-print media is the study of the media themselves, particularly film and television, as important art forms, and courses in the media are now relatively common offerings in secondary school English programs. Many teachers involve students in the original production of films, slides, video tapes, and other creative audio-visual forms.

### WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The chapter to this point has attempted to sketch the parameters of English teaching today. It may be appropriate to conclude with some speculation about tomorrow.

In an unusual study, Edmund J. Farrell has gleaned predictions about the future of the teaching of English from four groups of eminent educators: specialists in learning theory, educational technologists, secondary curriculum specialists, and specialists in English and English education.<sup>4</sup>

Generally, these educators foresee a future that is not as forbidding or automated, or dehumanized as that of many projectors. The specialists in learning theory foresee testing of student achievement by more accurate and more significant programs; testing of educational quality on a national basis. They foresee that computer and other electronically assisted instruction not only will increase but may eventually cause a redefinition of teacher responsibilities and behavior. As yet, computer assisted instruction (CAI) has not made significant inroads in English, but its greater relevance may come with increasingly sophisticated methodology. Learning specialists also think there will be less emphasis on teaching basic reading skills in the secondary school and that interpretation of reading will equal interpretation of other media.

The predictions of the educational technologists are surprisingly modest considering the potential of their field. Naturally, they foresee the growing use of electronic media and resulting greater individualization and decentralization of learning. However, they also say, 'Teachers and schools will not be replaced by sophisticated media.'

Not surprisingly, general curriculum specialists predict more modular scheduling, differentiated staffing, and multilevel ungraded programs, along with greater stress on human relations. Some school systems already have developed plans for differentiating teaching

<sup>4</sup> *Deciding The Future: A Forecast of Responsibilities of Secondary Teachers of English 1970-2000 A.D.* (Urbana III: NCTE, 1971).

personnel into a hierarchy ranging from master teacher to paraprofessional employees or teacher aides. Beginning certified teachers usually fit somewhere in the middle of the hierarchy and obtain the opportunity to advance through competence experience and advanced training. Human relations training has also become a relatively familiar component in both pre service and in service teacher education programs.

The thoughts of specialists in English parallel fairly closely the recent trends that have already been noted: trends toward more flexible curricula with clearly developed behavioral objectives and an emphasis on process rather than on content; greater variety in the content and organization of literature programs; broadened language study; greater attention to processes underlying written and oral composition; and stronger emphasis on multimedia learning. Thus they see in the next few decades a stabilizing of the secondary English program with the base in today's trends.

It is obvious that the future in education as in any other field will be made from a network of choices in which every teacher will have a share. Such a future is complex and challenging and promises increased opportunity for human service and self fulfillment for the teacher of English.

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ADVENTURES IN EDUCATION AT

# HERBERT HOOVER HIGH

"THE STUDENT TEACHER"

WRITER: DON ALLEN

ARTIST: HALSEY TAYLOR

HI, KIDS! I'M YOUR NEW STUDENT TEACHER. AND BOY O' BOY... ARE WE EVER GONNA HAVE LOTS OF FUN THIS SEMESTER.



"WHAT IS THIS 'DESAME STREET'?"



MY NAME IS BETTY JO BEZINGLES, BUT YOU CAN CALL ME TWINKY. THAT'S WHAT ALL MY FR. ENDS AT COLLEGE CALL ME AND I'M JUST SURE THAT WE'RE ALL GOING TO BE FRIENDS TOO.



"TWINKY???"



YOUR REGULAR TEACHER, MISS RATCHER, TOLD ME I WOULD BE FREE TO TEACH CREATIVELY TO MY OWN WAY AS WE SAY. SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT DOING ALL THAT DRAGGY OL' STUFF THAT USUALLY MAKES SCHOOL SO ANNOYING. POKING.



"AT LEAST IT LOOKS LIKE AN EASY KID."



WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO IS WATCH SOME GROOVY MOVIES AND LISTEN TO SOME REAL COOL RECORDS AND RAP ABOUT ALL THE STUFF THAT TEACHERS YOU DO!



I'M ALL RATTED OUT FROM LAST YEAR'S STUDENT TEACHER...



AANYBE SOME OF YOU ARE WONDERING WHAT ALL THIS HAS TO DO WITH SCHOOL. WHAT YOU'LL BE LEARNING WELL, WHAT WE'RE GOING TO LEARN IS HOW TO COMMUNICATE, RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER ON AN HONEST HUMAN LEVEL.

ONE TEACHER (MRS. RATCHER) GO OUT THE DOOR DOWN THE WEST HALLWAY TO THE EAST STAIRS AND OUT THE NORTH EAST.



WE LEARNED THAT FROM LAST YEAR'S STUDENT TEACHERS.



GOLLY GEE WHILLIKERS! BOYS AND GIRLS. I'M ALL GROOVY PURELY WITH EYE TENSEMENT! AFTER ALMOST FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE HERE I AM IN FRONT OF MY VERY OWN CLASS WITH MY OWN LITTLE MINDS TO MOLD.

WELL, TWINKY, YOU'VE GOT THE DOOR DOWN THE WEST HALLWAY TO THE NORTH STAIRS AND OUT THE NORTH EAST.



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MY MIND'S STARTING TO FEEL MOLDY ALREADY

I MEAN I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TEACHER-- EVEN A NICE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL...



AND WHEN I SAW SANDY OPEN IN UP THE DOWN STAIRS, THAT REALLY CINCED IT



THEY MUST LIKE THAT AS A BOY C TRAINING PLAN FOR THESE DAYS-LIKES



"A TEACHER NEVER KNOWS WHERE HER INFLUENCE STAYS" THAT'S WHAT THEY TOLD US IN SCHOOL "A TEACHER EFFECTS ETERNITY" THEY SAID.

JUSTICE WITH ME...  
WHEN I WAS A BOY  
I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO  
DIDN'T THINK I WAS A BOY!



WHERE IS MISS RITCHIE NOW THAT WE NEED HER?



I WANT TO TOUCH YOUR LITTLE LIVES, BOYS AND GIRLS. I WANT TO BECOME A LITTLE PART OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU, SO THAT SOMEDAY YOU'LL LOOK BACK AND SAY MISS RITCHIE HELPED TO MAKE ME WHAT I AM TODAY...



-FRANCO-SCHIZOPHRENIC!



TO ME TEACHING IS MORE THAN JUST A JOB. TO ME IT'S MY OWN LITTLE WAY OF SPREADING LOVE, PEACE, AND JOY IN THIS TROUBLED WORLD OF OURS YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?



THIS IS GETTING EMBARRASSING



TO BEGIN WITH, I'D LIKE TO GO AROUND THE ROOM AND HAVE EACH OF YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELVES BY GIVING YOUR NAME AND TELLING ME ABOUT YOUR HOPE, FEARS, DREAMS AND DESIRES...



I THINK I'M GOING TO BE DOCK!

END

## STUDENTS TODAY

When the teacher faces his first class on his first day of teaching what and whom does he face? Those two great unknowns represent a frightening and possibly frustrating prospect. Anything can happen. Sometimes almost anything does happen. And what happens triggers emotions ranging from ecstasy to despair. Naturally the teacher prefers the ecstasy, but the teacher fears even more than the despair and frustration a nothing experience a class period that is blah to both teacher and students.

Students appear in the English classroom on that first morning for many reasons. Some are there because they do have a real intellectual curiosity, some because there's nothing better to do, some because their friends are in the class, and some because they have been forced by parents or administrators or the law. Likewise student attitudes thereafter will vary considerably from day to day depending on what happens between class sessions. A fight with parents, a broken romance, a lost football game, an experience with drugs, a run in with the police, all will affect the adolescent's attitude toward involvement in an English class. A teacher is unrealistic to expect or demand that students perform exactly the same way from day to day. The teacher needs to remember that flexibility and a willingness to adjust are essentials in establishing a class climate of mutual trust and respect.

Who are the students the teacher faces? What do they expect from school? What are they capable of? What do they care about? What do they know? What are their experiences? What do they expect from their English class? What do they fear most about English? Are they excited or bored or angry or apathetic when they walk into the classroom?

The teacher needs to find some tentative answers to these questions early in the semester for without them the teacher will remain unsure what material might be used and in what ways that material

can be presented effectively. Perhaps, it is because the range of answers and possibilities is so vast that the teacher is frightened by that first day or week of teaching.

## WHAT ARE STUDENTS LIKE? WHAT DO THEY WANT?

To say that each student is a unique individual is to repeat an obvious but accurate educational truism. A class may range from the "eager-beaver, goodie-good, book-worm, teacher-led" student to the "I dare you to teach me anything" one. Even in the so-called homogeneously grouped class, differences in abilities, skills, and attitudes are vast, and the teacher should not be misled by any label applied by anyone. Those groups labeled heterogeneous will, of course, possess even wider differences. The teacher needs to discover and mine the differences and similarities in students and to capitalize on both.

There are similarities among students, no matter how diverse they may seem to be. Eager to learn or bored by school, rebellious or apathetic (two sides of the same coin, really—rebellious because they wish for fast change, apathetic because they feel that change comes too slow or not at all), students share some common needs.

Not very long ago, one of this book's authors talked to a number of young people, asking them what they wanted out of education, what they thought of their teachers, and what they had liked or feared or disliked about their schools. Not everyone agreed on any one thing, but collectively and individually they raised four points over and over: four wishes they had for schools and teachers.

**HEROES** Students said that they wanted someone to look up to, some heroes worth their emulation, not objects or people to ridicule, not groups or public officials to take pokes at, but someone to admire. They hadn't failed to find someone worth admiring on their own, they just thought that teachers sometimes overlooked the necessity of finding heroes as well as villains, that in the process of muckraking and discussing the iconoclastic, the teachers obscured their own personal heroes. Maybe in our attempt to make sure that students see the reality of the world, teachers have gone too far. There are manure piles in the world, there are rose bushes, too. A teacher who spends his time pretending that rose bushes abound and that they are all that are fit to talk about is a fool, but so is the teacher who pretends that the manure piles are the only subjects fit for consideration. True, all men are mortal, but some men transcend mere mortality, and sometimes gods do walk among us. True, all men have feet of clay, but some men momentarily make us look at their eyes and not at their feet. Giving young people some chance to consider these men is not the same as pretending that these mortals are gods. Soon after the



resignation of Spiro Agnew, a reporter set out to sound the temper of the masses, asking them their reactions to the resignation. One mechanic answered in what was unbappily a typical fashion: "It's politics, all politics. He was wrong, but they all do it. Everybody does it." Does everyone?

**VALUES** Students said that they needed to know more about values—the things that people believe in, the beliefs that people die for, and maybe more important, the beliefs people are willing to live for. At a time when people have reason to fear instantaneous annihilation, when they live under a wartime economy, when the young are decimated by undeclared but very lethal wars, and when corruption and the practice of the big lie are common, young people continue to care about values and beliefs. That may account in part for the popularity of elective courses in the Bible as literature or the supernatural or Asian literature. It may account for the excitement surrounding filmmaking, the one medium relatively unspoiled by teachers and wide open to students finding, exploring, and defining their beliefs.

These young people do not want English preachers, but English teachers who can help them to find books emphasizing values and value systems. They need opportunities to explore these books on their own, and that may account for the popularity of electives in free reading, giving students the opportunity to read and find values worth considering and testing. The popularity of Hesse and Vonnegut and Salinger and Steinbeck and Malamud and Hinton and Zindel is due in part to their heroes (and they are that, not protagonists but heroes) and their insistence on testing their values through living or in searching for new values worth trying out.

**HOPE** Students said that they needed some sense of hope, some feeling that mankind will not merely survive but that it deserves to survive. Student negativism may be to some extent the fault of teachers too concerned that students read and discuss only the reality that suggests the cupidity and narrowness of man. It may be the fault of English teachers too eager to give experiences to students too young and naive. Teachers should not underrate students' sophistication but neither should they equate physical maturity with emotional maturity and assume that high school students are all equally ready for, for instance, the misanthropy of *Gulliver's Travels*. Without both teacher help and student maturity, students can easily read Swift as a despiser of all mankind, just as they can all too easily misread most satire, taking the metaphor literally and not recognizing the satirist's fictionalized sermon as an act of love. Students deserve the chance to read literature which is optimistic in the best sense, literature which reals

tically portrays man as he is and as he can be Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*, Susan Hinton's *The Outsiders*, and Barbara Wersba's *Run Softly, Go Fast* portray believable young people in a very real world struggling to find something and someone to hang onto, to believe in The characters in these novels are not willing to accept the easy answers but ultimately and after the struggle they do find people to believe in—themselves

**HUMOR** Students said that teachers and classrooms needed a large dose of laughter, that their teachers talked about the importance of a sense of humor but provided little literature to amuse and little occasion to laugh These students were not asking for Pollyonno but for literature in which man found some reason to be happy Rafael Sabatini, author of some best-selling swashbuckling novels of the 1910s and 1920s and now unhappily forgotten, began his best novel *Scoromouché* with this description of his hero "He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad " Why is it that English teachers sometimes forget? What could be more natural or more fun than following *Macbeth* with some of Richard Armour's *Twisted Tales from Shakespeare* or Thurber's "The *Macbeth Murder Mystery*"? If students enjoy Pae, they will probably enjoy R P Falk's *American Literature in Parody* (retitled *The Antie Muse* in paperback) Teachers need no justification for using humor with students (although analyzing humor is quite a different thing) *Mad* magazine, comic strips like *BC* or *The Wizard of Id* or *Tumbleweeds*, records like the *BBC Coon Shows* or *Monty Python*, and short films like *Blaze Glory* or *Enter Hamlet* or *Love Me, Love Me, Love Me* deserve a place in English classes simply because they are enjoyable Teachers may feel some need to justify humor, to make humor respectable to other people, but they can be honest with their classes Humor exists because man enjoys it and needs it, and that's enough

## PROBLEMS FACING YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

There is nothing new about many of the basic problems adolescents face They as those before them need to undergo a series of initiation rites They are likely to feel both anxiety and pleasure about their growing independence and the break-up of their family's unity They may experience temporary or extended periods of alienation from family, friends, or society They may find momentary elation in a movie or record only to find it childish or dated a week or month later They may have trouble finding some tenable and acceptable relationship with members of the opposite sex—possibly even with members of the same sex They may worry about goals and vocations

However some problems are different or at least intensified for today's students

**FUTURE SHOCK** Today's complex society suffers more than any previous one from future shock described by Alvin Toffler as 'the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time'.<sup>1</sup> For many adults and young people change has come too fast to be successfully absorbed. Different students have reacted in quite different ways to the shock: some tripping back to nature and dropping out of our technocratic society; many searching willy nilly for something to hang onto. That search may account for the recent popularity of Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and the continuing popularity of Antoine de Saint Exupéry's *The Little Prince*.

**McLUHAN'S MESSAGE** The omnipresence of virtually instantaneous communication is a daily part of young people's lives. This generation is the first to be able to read about and virtually experience a war simultaneously via television. Although television film and tape recordings are not new, this is the first generation to grow up unaware that these non print media have not always been man's tools. That such media are exciting toys with tremendous educational and cultural potential is obvious; that each reflects a distinct point of view and considerable editing is less apparent and that is an important area of concern to the English teacher. Young people have little difficulty looking at computer made films (such as those by John Whitney) or films using split screen techniques such as *Multiple Man* (a short film shown originally at the Montreal Exposition) whereas these films sometimes confuse and often irritate adult viewers. McLuhan's often repeated comment 'The medium is the message'<sup>2</sup> may appear ambiguous or misleading to adults but youths' own work in filmmaking, videotaping or creating slide tape presentations made them aware long ago that each medium is different, making slightly different demands and yielding slightly different rewards.

**THE WORK ETHIC** The idea of work as a thing good in and of itself has been challenged by many of the present generation.

See the people. See them work. They work hard. Work work work. All you need is work. Work is what makes the world go.

1 Alvin Toffler *Future Shock* (New York: Random House 1970) p. 2

2 Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw Hill 1964) may be the single most influential book of the century—at least on educators—and through them on young people.

around. Where would you be if people didn't work? How would you get that chair you are sitting on? Or read the morning paper? Or make instant coffee?<sup>3</sup>

Whatever its faults or virtues, the work ethic was a positive force to prior generations. Adolescents today who have rejected that ethic have not always found a replacement, and their consequent aimlessness and uncertainty of purpose are apparent to teachers. Some ramifications may be less immediately visible.

Regardless of race, young people have also been affected by the shift from manual to cognitive labor. No longer do they find opportunities to set pins in bowling alleys, milk cows, chop wood, bell bop, work summer in industry, or perform for pay the occasional jobs that were available two or three decades ago. By not holding a job, youth not only are denied a traditional initiation symbol into adulthood and its responsibilities but are prevented from establishing at an early age a respect for legitimate authority. The consequences may not be just a widening and deepening of the generation gap between young people and adults but a serious lack of understanding by youth of how a society, to preserve itself, utilizes authority and delegates tasks in order to have varied and necessary functions performed. Anomie is widespread, particularly among young people of minority backgrounds who cannot anticipate a time when they will be full participants in the economy, as well as among young people who have repudiated values they believe responsible for their parents' affluence.<sup>4</sup>

Surely, the development of our mechanized and technological world has been in part responsible for the indifference to (or abhorrence of) the work ethic. The use of machines has been called dehumanizing; society, lacking in individual worth. If people feel this way, then what value has school or work to them?

3 Diane Divoky, ed., *How Old Will You Be in 1984?* (New York: Avon, 1969), p. 234. Divoky's collection of articles, editorials, and cartoons from high school underground newspapers is an invaluable book for teachers who really want to know what high school students are questioning. Although the book is several years old, it, like another excellent collection of underground writing John Birmingham's *Our Time Is Now* (New York: Praeger, 1970), is not outdated. Another basic book is Jerry Farber's *The Student as Nigger* (New York: Contact Books, 1969). Farber's book has offended many adults, but it has seemed almost revealed truth to many young people. As such it is important reading for teachers.

4 Edmund J. Farrell, *Deciding the Future: A Forecast of Responsibilities of Secondary Teachers of English, 1970-2000 A.D.* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1971), p. 61. Farrell's educated guess on English teaching tomorrow is must reading for any English teacher, novice or old hand.

**COMPETITION AND COOPERATION** The devaluation of the work ethic may explain some student antagonism or apathy toward competition. Experienced teachers have noticed a growing resentment toward competitive sports testing and grades and student elective office. When students are initially unresponsive to competition establishment (parental or school) pressure to compete almost certainly will lead to hostility and the hostility and frustration brought about by trying to explain an idea to an adult totally unwilling to listen almost inevitably will lead to apathy. Adults sometimes remark: Where would we be today without competition? Competition made this country what it is. Some adolescents might argue that if competition is responsible for the state of humanity today maybe it's about time we tried cooperation instead. Charles Reich believes that students today feel little need to prove themselves through competition preferring to accept themselves as they are and to feel pride and worth in their own uniqueness.<sup>5</sup> Teachers and other adults brought up under the work ethic may have difficulty understanding these students much less accepting them.

**SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITIES** Awareness among teenagers of social responsibilities and religious needs is common today. Some argue that older generations have pushed this responsibility aside in a search for power and affluence. Although that argument seems specious to many adults, it is one the English teacher ought to be prepared for.

I think the masses of people have been perverted. They have been economically manipulated, emotionally suppressed and sexually hung up. Their humanness has been bridled, modified and compromised; they are human beings who have been able to realize only a fraction of themselves.

And they seek to pass their perversions onto us, their offspring, their products. The extent to which they have been successful is frightening.<sup>6</sup>

Racism, war, overpopulation, disease, mechanization and dehumanization, ecological imbalance and urban dilemmas concern many young people. At the same time, religious drives are strong, manifesting themselves in proliferating communes, cults and campus crusades or in the organized churches. Gibran's *The Prophet* and Hesse's *Demian*, *Steppenwolf* and *Siddhartha* are widely read, elective

5 *The Greening of America* (New York: Random House, 1970), passim.

6 Divoky, *How Old Will You Be*, n 1984, p. 214.

courses in the Bible as literature are widely offered and accepted, and sacred texts in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are often quoted

**RESENTMENT TOWARD SCHOOLS** Several years ago, John Holt commented that for many students school is a symbol of failure. Failure yesterday, failure today, failure tomorrow, failure forever. Holt was not speaking only of the slow student. Rather, he was speaking about many students who fail because they are bored or scared or confused by the routine. Failure, confusion, resentment, fear, and boredom are all frightening to the teacher who knows what an education—a real education worthy the name—can be and understands that the hatred often reflects a desire for an education, one achieved through mutual respect, compassion, and a willingness to help.

Schools which continue to offer the same courses year after year after year without revision or addition are legitimate sources of student complaint. If students once were willing to have information funneled into their heads without question, that day is long past. Students today object to being told what they should or should not learn without some rational explanation. They resist being told that there is one and only one way to learn or analyze particular material. They legitimately want to be exposed to many ideas and points of view, to have the freedom to weigh those ideas and viewpoints, and arrive at their own truth. Students today want a voice in planning their own curriculum.

## LEARNING ABOUT STUDENTS' NEEDS AND INTERESTS

If the teacher is to see each student as unique and to develop an English program to meet those unique needs, interests, and abilities, the teacher clearly must learn about his students early in the semester. Ignorance will inevitably mean frustration and antagonism for both class and teacher.

How can the teacher learn about his students? Obviously, he can talk with other teachers or he can consult students' records. Both methods are fast, but both are dangerous. There's probably no method which more surely pigeonholes a student than knowing his IQ unless it would be knowing his grade in last year's English class.

**THE STUDENT INTEREST INVENTORY** Although learning about each student takes time and effort and the knowledge is always inexact, one simple method for learning a great deal about students is through an interest inventory. The inventory, usually handed out to students during the first week of class, asks a few simple questions:

What are your favorite movies?

What television programs do you especially like?

What magazines do you most enjoy?

Of all the people you know or have heard about, who do you admire most? Why?

What books have you most enjoyed reading?

If a writer would be willing to write a book for you on whatever you wanted, what would it be about? What would the major characters be like? How would it end?

Other questions could be added, but even this simple inventory would take only about ten to twenty minutes for students to complete and would provide information helpful to any English teacher. It would give an early sample of students' writing, some idea of their interests in non-print media, and some idea of the literature they read or would like to read. The teacher should read each student response carefully, partly because effective individualized instruction can only be based on such knowledge and, partly because the responses will provide a framework for the total English program for the semester.

**TALKING AND LISTENING** Teachers should find or make opportunities to talk with students inside and outside the classroom. Students might care more about a class if they knew the teacher cared enough to notice student interests other than classes and knew that teachers were human. Listening is of far greater importance than talking; listening to students in the halls, in classes, at a dance, or at a football game. For this reason, teachers should attend extracurricular activities, whether their students are involved or not.

**STUDENTS' READING** A teacher should learn much about students by noting books that are particularly popular during one year, either by reading professional publications or by talking to librarians or other English teachers. During the past year or so, the following novels have been very popular with seventh to twelfth graders across the country.

#### *Sex and Pregnancy*

Ann Head, *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*

Paul Zindel, *My Darling, My Homburger*

Patricia Dizenzo, *Phoebe*

Jean Renvoize, *A Wild Thing*

Zoa Sherburne, *Too Bad about the Homes Girl*

#### *Alienation and Loneliness*

S. E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*

Glendon Swarthout, *Bless the Beasts and Children*

Paul Zindel, *The Pigman*  
 Evan Hunter, *Lost Summer*  
 David Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade*  
 Barbara Wersba, *Run Softly, Go Fast*

#### Initiation

Richard Bradford, *Red Sky at Morning*  
 J D Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*  
 John Knowles, *A Separate Peace*  
 James Marshall, *Walkabout*

#### Race

Frank Bonham, *Duranga Street*  
 David Westheimer, *My Sweet Charlie*  
 Elizabeth Kata, *A Patch of Blue*  
 Clair Huffaker, *Flop* (originally titled *Never Trust a Drunken Indian*)  
 Ann Fairbairn, *Five Smooth Stones*  
 Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*  
 William Armstrong, *Souder*  
 Kristin Hunter, *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou*

#### Crime

Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*  
 Harold Robbins, *A Stone for Danny Fisher*

#### Fantasy and Reality

Richard Bach, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*  
 Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*  
 Lloyd Alexander, *The Black Cauldron*

#### War

Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun*  
 Joseph Heller, *Catch 22*  
 John Neufeld, *Sleep, Two Three Four!*

#### Love

Erich Segal, *Love Story*  
 Catherine Marshall, *Christy*  
 Robert McKay, *Dave's Song*  
 June Jordan, *His Own Where*

#### Drugs

Lee Kingman, *The Peter Pan Boy*  
 S E Hinton, *That Was Then This Is Now*  
 Maia Wojciechowska, *Tuned Out*



## STUDENTS IN THEIR MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Even more than other teachers English teachers have unique opportunities to explore the peaks and valleys of man his stupidity and cupidity his nobility and spirituality English teachers explore the past and present of the English language in all its manifestations its possibilities and limitations its dialects and idiosyncrasies They explore literature's record of man's struggles problems progress and frustrations They explore with students some ways man can communicate to his fellows in written and spoken form through film tape recordings and pictures Out of necessity teachers and students of English deal with cultures and cultural values since language whether oral written or filmed is the essence of culture reflecting man's various views of truth human potential and the human dilemma framed by rhetoric and refracted through individual experience belief and culture Oral written or filmed language and the experiences its creators have in framing their own ideas may reflect contemporary trends widely shared Ultimately however those creators speak write or film for and out of themselves

All this is readily apparent to the English teacher whose classroom composition reflects widely diverging backgrounds and cultures However ignoring the less apparent differences between twenty five to forty seemingly homogeneous students can be a dangerous fantasy Even such a group may differ significantly in their responses Paradoxically the less homogeneous class may prove easier for English teachers to work with since its differences are distinct

## SOME GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

Because many English teachers are middle class and because they may unthinkingly accept the beliefs of their group working with students with differing values can be a genuine problem Therefore teachers need to find guidelines which will lead to mutual respect acceptance and growth The following are offered as suggestions

**BE GENUINE AND HONEST** Teachers should not pretend to be what they are not Students can easily spot the phony They deserve honesty and fairness and respect not condescension or the nobility of those who bear the white man's burden Teachers should not talk about rapping unless such words come naturally Usually a teacher's use of slang is inaccurate at best or totally out of context at worst Students can accept almost anyone except someone who seems to be putting them on The teacher may not be doing anything of the kind

but his forced chumminess may all too easily be interpreted in that unfavorable light

**BE SPECIFIC ABOUT CLASS GOALS** English sometimes seems to students to be a structureless amalgam of parts with only the most generally specified goals—to improve reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Therefore, teachers would be wise to explore with their students ways to structure the class in order to meet student needs and desires and to most effectively use teaching materials. The fine line between freedom and anarchy is easily blurred, and teacher and students must develop a clear structure whereby both can see what they are doing, why they are doing it, and where they are going. Although class goals can be developed by both students and teacher, it's mostly the teacher's role to develop sensitive, sensible, and creative ways to reach these goals. Some teachers lower their standards by using easier material in multiethnic, multiracial classes, feeling that these students cannot handle regular course work. Unhappily, this is an obvious pedagogical and intellectual slap in the face for these students. The usual advice to teachers remains sound: first determine the students' level and start from there. Teachers should not make assumptions about their students' intelligence or capabilities.

**BE COMPASSIONATE AND REALISTIC ABOUT STUDENTS** Teachers should neither be surprised nor depressed to discover that their students may assume teachers want to be lied to. Many students have learned that teachers do not want to learn what students really want or think. Instead, teachers want "right" answers or "appreciative" responses—anything but honesty and the truth.

Two incidents may suggest how well students have learned the art of lying. Recently, several secondary teachers went to a ghetto high school to talk with black students during their lunch hour. The kids, who must have loved the idea of devoting one of their few free periods to snoopery English teachers, responded with statements that amused some and, incredibly enough, pleased others. "We love school," they said. "School is my favorite place." "We like and admire teachers." "English teachers really know what they're talking about." "English class is important." "School rules may seem stupid, but they are necessary." "Principals really have the best interest of kids at heart." "Grades are important, though you ought to work because it's good for you, not for the grade." "We like teachers who make us work hard." "We do not like easy teachers." Grammar is necessary if you're going to learn to read or write.

The same group of teachers also attended a production of the Watts Tower Players, a group of improvisational actors composed largely of black kids and a few Chicanos. At the end of the performance, the

teachers were encouraged to talk to the actors. Two of them cornered one young black and asked him, 'What do you think of society? I mean, what should we do about racial problems?' He answered, "Society isn't worth a damn, and it had got to burn itself up." Unhappily, the two English teachers and several others who overheard the remark and had joined the group couldn't let the remark go. In three minutes they had 'converted' the actor to their point of view. They got him to back down on what he obviously and deeply felt, and everyone presumably left feeling better, though it is doubtful that he was altered at all. He had taken the easy way out, agreeing with people who clearly had no interest in listening only a desire to prove how wrong he was.

Establishing a class climate and rapport in which students listen to each other and, more significantly, the teacher listens to students takes time and patience. It also takes a compassionate and realistic teacher willing to accept what exists while working to improve communication.

**BE WILLING TO SEE INDIVIDUALS, NOT GROUPS** Teachers should not assume that all of any racial or ethnic group will necessarily agree on what is ennobling or deplorable. No WASP can argue that any book or idea or work of art is wholly acceptable or unacceptable to all WASPS, yet some teachers have made that foolish assumption about other groups. To say that all blacks will like Ellison's *Invisible Man* or Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* suggests that all blacks are alike—a foolish but not untypical assumption. A few years back, a young black fourth- or fifth grade student approached a librarian and asked if she had a book on Carl Yastrzemski, an outfielder for the Boston Red Sox. She looked puzzled, and asked him if he wouldn't rather read about Jackie Robinson or Hank Aaron or Willie Mays. He reiterated that he wanted something about Carl Yastrzemski. Annoyed, the librarian asked if he wouldn't rather read about Martin Luther King or Carl Rowan or George Washington Carver or Ralph Bunche. The boy stubbornly declined, the librarian finally got the book, and the boy went off happy, although a little puzzled by her desire to give him books he didn't want. The librarian never recognized the fact that the boy could be far more interested in baseball than in race. Unfortunately, she had to fit him, as she would all members of any group, into a stereotype.

**BE COMPASSIONATE AND REALISTIC ABOUT OTHER TEACHERS AND PARENTS** Teachers should not expect other teachers, administrators, school board members, or parents to be wildly ecstatic about preparing students for the realities of today and tomorrow. One participant in an NDEA Institute for teachers considering teaching

approaches and materials, a teacher who had worked for nearly twenty years in an almost entirely black and Chicano school objected to time being devoted to students who would never appreciate or understand anyway. He remonstrated, "I've worked with them for nearly half my life, and you know, I still can't tell one black kid from another." Presumably what a teacher can't see or won't see can't touch or affect him.<sup>7</sup>

**BE UP-TO-DATE** Teachers should not expect that they will have time or opportunity to experience or read or see or hear everything, not even everything about and for students in just one English class. Teachers cannot expect total awareness or total knowledge, but they can try to keep abreast of what changes are taking place in the English curriculum nationally and what their own students are reading or seeing or listening to. Although joining professional groups and reading professional publications will help to keep English teachers up-to-date, still, reading about a book or a movie does not replace experiencing them. Teachers should read as many adolescent novels, popular best sellers, and classics as possible, just as they should read magazines, see new feature-length films, and attend film festivals.<sup>8</sup> Staying alert to changes in the youth culture, especially changes in language, dress, and music, is important to the teacher, not so he can talk or dress like a teenager but so he can understand what moves, disturbs, or titillates young people.

No teacher has the right to remain fixed or static, caring only about his own world. His students have universes of needs and interests which can be ignored only at the price of teacher isolation. The age of an individual teacher counts for little if it does not mean psychological rigidity. Students understand and respect the essence of Peter Drucker's comment, "Here I am 58, and I still don't know what I'm going to do when I grow up."<sup>9</sup> Teachers, knowing Drucker's level of expertise and international fame, ought to ponder his words.

7. Many educators have bewailed the watered down schooling given minority students. Several writers maintain that minority schooling has rarely bordered on education. See "Kenneth Clark's Revolutionary Slogan: Just Teach Them to Read," *The New York Times Magazine* (March 18, 1973) 14-15, 59-65; Daniel Fader, *The Naked Children* (New York: Macmillan, 1971); William W. Brickman and Stanley Lehrer, eds., *Education and the Many Faces of the Disadvantaged: Cultural and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Wiley, 1972), and John Holt's many books, particularly *The Underachieving School* (New York: Pilman, 1969).

8. A helpful list of things an English teacher should be aware of is provided by J. N. Hook, Paul H. Jacobs, and Raymond D. Crisp's *What Every English Teacher Should Know* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1970).

9. Mary Harrington Hall, "A Conversation with Peter F. Drucker," *Psychology Today*, 1 (March 1968): 21.

## CONCLUSION

Above everything else, an English teacher should be in the classroom because he wants to be there, because he likes young people and cares what happens to them, because he's excited about teaching English and he needs to transmit that excitement to young people, because he knows students have as much or more to give him as he will give them, because he believes that English and the reality outside are inseparable, because he cares to bring his very best every day

His job is to bring students, their needs and their interests together with literature, language, and non print media His job is to bring students concerned with the energy crisis into contact with ecological and scientific literature with films like *Ark*, with plentiful opportunities to speak and write and listen His job is to bring students concerned with values heroes racial discrimination religious issues love or anything else together with the multiplicity of experiences in literature films and records His opportunities depend almost entirely upon his own insight energy and imagination and the insight energy, and imagination he can stimulate in his students

Using his talents and allowing and encouraging students to expand theirs is the often frustrating and frequently happy task of the English teacher

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## PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION

Planning is the process of translating a teacher's vision and hopes into classroom realities. Whatever kind of classroom he hopes to have, open and informal or conventional and highly structured, planning will be necessary. Vague plans usually lead to problems, especially for the beginning teacher who has not yet faced a class of less than eager students and not yet accumulated a repertoire of proven methods. The hoped-for discussion becomes a droning lecture, the stimulating activity becomes tedious busy work, the free and open classroom becomes a frustrating illustration of bored behavior problems. To transform a classroom into an environment in which students learn, grow, and become involved requires more than a teacher's vision of the desired outcome. Nonetheless, that vision must be there, and it is useful to begin planning by examining the visions and perceptions which will influence the choices the teacher makes. What does he hope to accomplish for and with his students? What does his ideal English class look like? What do students do there, and what does he do there? How will his students perceive his class? (Seeing oneself and the class through students' eyes is one of the best ways to keep in touch with reality.)

**TEACHER PERSPECTIVES** The teacher whose vision is narrowed to the perspective of his own personal school experience, probably as a successful student who enjoyed English, is unlikely to appreciate or plan for the range of abilities, attitudes, and interests he will face. In his routines and activities, he will reproduce the role of teacher he remembers from his own school and college days, and the probable results will be student apathy, discipline problems, and frustration for the teacher himself.



Understandably, most beginning teachers are more interested in practical survival strategies than in philosophies of education. However, it is eminently practical for them too to begin with some idea of what they are planning for, and why. The teacher's perceptions of his role, his students, and the purposes of teaching English will influence what he does and hopes to do in the classroom. For example, if the teacher sees his subject and his objectives as bounded by the content of a particular anthology and a grammar text, he will create a limited learning environment and will likely overlook the rich opportunities to illustrate language behavior by its endless occurrence in everyday life. If he assumes that his students must read and study all the literature in an anthology, time limits alone have already drastically reduced his options. Do the students really have to read these particular selections? What would happen if alternative readings were provided instead? Obviously, the range of possible teaching strategies expands tremendously once the teacher realizes that his subject is broader than a particular text and that writing skills and linguistic analysis can be learned in a great variety of ways.

One way a teacher can examine and transcend his own basic assumptions is to challenge those things he is most likely to take for granted using questions such as the following:

1. What if I had no texts or anthologies, how would I teach? What would I use for subject matter?
2. What if my students were not required to take this course? How could I interest them in coming to class voluntarily?
3. What if the school building weren't here? Where in the community would it be most useful to meet with my students?
4. What if there were no set subjects in the curriculum and I had to justify my teaching by answering the question "What can I really do that will help kids to survive and prosper in today's society and culture?"
5. What if my salary and tenure really depended on how well I helped my students understand and solve the communication problems they face everyday?
6. What if my salary and tenure were determined by how much I have helped my average and below average students?

A great many restrictions and demands are placed upon teachers, to be sure, and more exist in some schools than in others. However, some teachers use real or imagined restrictions as scapegoats for their own creative failure. More than one teacher has steadfastly insisted that he couldn't use particular methods because 'they won't permit it,' while teachers just down the hall have been using those same forbidden methods for years.

**THE REALITIES** A classroom is almost always more complicated messy and unpredictable than most teachers care to admit and teachers should be aware of this as they plan. We really have very little hard knowledge to go on in making the day to day decisions involved in teaching. In almost every case the most honest answer to a specific teaching question should begin with *it all depends* and end with *but it's really more complicated than that*. As David Holbrook says in *English for the Rejected*

Perhaps inevitably we substitute in our minds the theory or abstract account of a process for the more complex living experience of the process itself. The article we read or write the Ministry pamphlet the book or even the conversation in the staff room are taken to be what we are doing. Meanwhile what we do in the classroom is something quite different. It will probably be more human and warm hearted more sporadic disorganized and haphazard than we dare allow. It will contain hidden elements important and even crucial elements which neither we nor any of the printed or oral discussions of education will yet have apprehended or made vocal.<sup>1</sup>

The highly structured efficient well planned class in which students move from workbook exercises to reading assignments to dictated questions in a quiet orderly fashion simply masks the diverse feelings abilities and problems which appear in less structured activities. Planning will not eliminate the diversity and unpredictability of human learning; good planning takes such factors into account. Perhaps the first operating principle a good teacher learns is that when plans and realities are at odds he follows the realities and remembers them when he plans again. The most experienced hard working creative teacher is still confronted with problems and situations that he can deal with only by trial and error approaches but the more he knows and the more experienced and competent he becomes the less likely he is to be surprised and devastated by the unexpected.

The teacher who fails to account for his students' initial expectations may be unsuccessful either in changing their expectations or in achieving his own goals. More than one beginning teacher has had to prove to students that he could run a conventional classroom and be a demanding taskmaster before they would permit him to be more open and innovative. Established teaching routines however unimaginative or dull can provide students with a certain sense of security and sudden departures from these routines especially by a new and insecure teacher may lead to confusion and hostility rather than learning.

<sup>1</sup> (Cambridge 196.) p. 3

Teachers will experience two other crucial pressures, that of the community and that intrinsic to the job. The teacher who attempts merely to live up to the demands and expectations of others may find himself extremely frustrated. But neither can he ignore these demands. The student teacher who refuses to compromise with his supervisor or the beginning teacher who ignores the community's notion of proper teaching behavior may find himself without access to students or a job.

## DEVELOPING OBJECTIVES

Even vague or haphazard planning implies some sense of the outcome. Although the teacher who hurriedly scrawls "Discuss London's 'To Build a Fire'" in his plan book may have in mind only some general and perhaps idyllic notion of the class period itself, implied outcomes exist. There is the notion that "discussing" either has value in itself—it teaches the techniques of discussion—or will lead to other valuable results—an appreciation and understanding of London's story. Unless the teacher is a complete cynic, he implicitly operates on the assumption that what goes on in his classroom will benefit his students even though he may never question that assumption very carefully.

Unfortunately, as advocates of behavioral objectives point out, vague notions of where we are going may cause us to take some wrong turns. The teacher who hopes generally for student appreciation of literature may create boredom and hostility instead. Having objectives clearly in mind is no guarantee that we will achieve them, but its advantages are obvious. The teacher who wants students to enter the imaginative world of literature should proceed differently from the one who wants students to know about literary history. Teaching students to read Elizabethan English with ease involves different procedures than teaching them to see the contemporary relevance of *Romeo and Juliet*, though the two objectives may be mutually dependent. Furthermore, the clearer one's objectives are, the easier it is to consider their value.

In an attempt to get teachers to think seriously about purposes and objectives, innovators at Portland, Oregon's John Adams High School ask all teachers to confront and seek answers to questions such as the following:

- 1 In what ways do you want people to be different after their contact with you than they were before?
- 2 What would you be willing to accept as evidence that you had succeeded?
- 3 What would you regard as undeniable evidence that you had failed and therefore should make changes?

- 4 How might you go about finding some kinds of evidence however tenuous for determining either success or failure?
- 5 How can you gather evidence in a way that is meaningful to some one else?

Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* insist that teachers constantly consider the real value of their teaching to students. They suggest that teachers ask themselves daily: What am I going to have my students do today? What is it good for? How do I know? <sup>2</sup> Although such questions are obvious and reasonable, it is amazing how seldom teachers ask them or act on the answers in the press of actual teaching. The question most frequently asked is probably: What am I going to do with that class tomorrow? —period

**WHICH OBJECTIVES TO STRESS** In developing teaching objectives today's English teacher is caught up in three major controversies. The first centers on the nature of the objectives to be stressed: whether to focus on conventional cognitive objectives (dealing with rational thought, intellectual development and knowledge), affective objectives (dealing with students' personal values, attitudes and feelings) or skills (such as reading, listening, writing and speaking.)

**Cognitive Objectives** The teacher who is primarily concerned with getting students to know, understand, be familiar with or think about particular things will probably stress cognitive objectives. He emphasizes the importance of students' intellectual development, their knowledge of the world and particularly of language and literature, and their ability to deal intelligently with experience. He may want students to have an awareness of their literary heritage so they may see more clearly their place in the richness of the culture. In teaching particular literary selections, he may concentrate on students' ability to understand what the writer is saying and to consider the relationship between the artist's vision of the world and the student's own visions. In planning for his classes, this teacher will pay particular attention to what students need and want to know in order to cope with the world, what literature will stimulate them to think about their own experiences, and what classroom activities will lead them to think more effectively, understand more clearly, and know more thoroughly. This concern for student intellectual development is seen in the oldest and most widely accepted objectives of schooling.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 368-69.

<sup>3</sup> [New York: Delacorte, 1969], p. 183.

**Affective Objectives** In recent years advocates of humanistic education have argued that English, and schooling generally, have become overly intellectual and too subject-centered. Educators such as George I. Brown<sup>4</sup> and Harold C. Lyon, Jr.<sup>5</sup> emphasize that the student is an emotional as well as a rational animal, and that we cannot ignore his emotions and personal feelings in our teaching. Lyon says

The intellect divorced from feelings is empty and meaningless. An education that is to be effective in preparing a child for life must take into account emotional as well as mental development. Schools must recognize that pleasure, spontaneity, and feelings are as vital if not more vital than intellectual achievement.<sup>6</sup>

The general humanistic movement toward the integration of cognitive and affective learning has been reflected in the work of many English teachers. British teachers such as David Holbrook and John Dixon<sup>7</sup> have stressed the need for a less academic view of the subject and for work centered on "first hand experience and real life." Kenneth Macrone<sup>8</sup> has argued against the traditional emphasis in composition on impersonal expository themes and for more personal writing drawn from student experience and concerns. Many writers on the teaching of literature have eschewed the rigorous analytical emphasis of the New Criticism and have focused on student response to and growth through literature. In language teaching the narrow emphasis on usage and syntax has been broadened by a revived interest in semantics and rhetoric, subjects dealing with the effects of language on human perceptions and behavior.

**Skill Objectives** The realization that many students enter and leave high school as functional illiterates suggests that, at least in their case, the development of such basic skills as reading and writing should be paramount. Whether through the use of affective techniques to build self-confidence and increase motivation, or through direct skill building activities, these students must obviously learn to read and write if they are to survive in our society. Forcing them to follow a standard series of books they cannot read is a cruel charade, and teachers confronted with such students will need to

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4 *Human Teaching for Human Learning* (New York: Viking, 1971).

5 *Learning to Feel: Feeling to Learn* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1971).

6 *Ibid.* p. 18.

7 Holbrook, *The Secret Places* (University Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1965) and Dixon, *Growth Through English* (Reading, England: National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967).

8 *Uptought* (New York: Hayden, 1970).

make special provisions to help them. Unfortunately, a great many schools and some teachers still choose to ignore the presence of such basic learning problems at the secondary level.

Although cognitive and affective objectives and skills all play some part in all learning, the emphasis a teacher gives to them will mold both his planning and teaching. Insofar as possible, the choice of objectives should be a result of conscious reflection and decision. It is one thing to stress cognitive objectives because one feels personally committed to and comfortable with them or because school policy and departmental examinations preclude another choice; it is quite another matter to stress cognition simply because that is what has always been done.

**BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES** The second controversy in selecting and developing objectives concerns the degree to which they can and should be stated and measured in precise terms. As defined in Robert Mager's immensely influential *Preparing Instructional Objectives*,<sup>9</sup> a complete behavioral objective states precisely what act(s) the student is to perform to indicate achievement of the objective, describes the important conditions under which the act is to be performed, and indicates at least the minimum level of acceptable performance. For example, a low-level objective in written composition might be

Given one 45 minute class period and the use of a dictionary (the conditions) the student will write an impromptu essay of at least 200 words on one of several topics provided by the teacher (the act). This essay will contain no more than two uncorrected spelling errors, no sentence fragments and no run on sentences (the criteria).

When dealing with basic skills such as spelling, it is fairly easy to identify both the behavior and criteria which indicate a student's achievement of particular objectives. Unfortunately, as the objectives become more abstract—and important—it is increasingly difficult to find observable behavior which reliably indicates achievement and to state the criteria of achievement precisely. What student behavior indicates an increased appreciation for literature or a greater understanding of the effects of language on perception? What criteria can measure such complex writing qualities as effectiveness, honesty of expression, or even clarity?

Most teachers agree with the behaviorists' basic premise that if an objective is worth working for, its achievement is worth measuring.

9 (Palo Alto, Calif.: Fearon, 1952).

However although teachers may agree that objectives should be carefully considered and quantified where possible they are also aware that available measuring instruments are limited and imprecise especially in affective and higher skill areas. Because it is much easier to measure low level mechanical skills and knowledge retention teachers fear that the pressure to develop behavioral objectives will reduce their subject to that level.

The complex issues involved in the use of behavioral objectives in English have been explored in two NCTE publications. *On Writing Behavioral Objectives for English* (1970) and *Accountability and the Teaching of English* (1972). They are discussed more extensively in Chapter 9 of this text.

Whether or not the pressure toward behaviorally stated objectives continues the controversy has forced many teachers into a salutary reconsideration of their objectives. It has also produced an extensive catalog of behavioral objectives<sup>10</sup> by the Tri University Project which teachers and English departments will probably find quite useful whatever their feelings about behaviorism. Although many of the objectives do not contain the three parts specified by Mager they provide an impressive array of suggestions for teachers. Items such as the following dealing with responses to literature indicate that in many cases behavior must serve as an imperfect indicator of desired outcome rather than as a precise measure of achievement.

- 1 During oral interpretations of plays and the dialog of fiction the student often volunteers and participates with animation.
- 2 In an informal panel or a rap session the student tells which kinds of periodicals and books he likes and defends his preferences.
- 3 The student discovers and re-creates relationships between a literary work and any other art form of his own making—for example a collage a photograph a drawing or even a film.<sup>11</sup>

Even if the teacher does not think of his objectives in precise behavioral terms he should consider just what his objectives are, what real value they have for his students, and what evidence he will look for and accept of his students' achievement. Surely some objectives can be stated in terms of observable student behavior. And just as surely the teacher can find some student behavior which indicates probable failure and the need for new strategies.

10 J. N. Hook et al. *Representative Performance Objectives for High School English* (New York: Ronald, 1972).

11 These examples are drawn from a preliminary report on the Tri University Project. Arnold Lazarus, "Performance Objectives in Reading and Responding to Literature," *English Journal* 61 (Jan. 1972): 52-58.

**FLEXIBILITY OF OBJECTIVES** The third controversy affecting teaching objectives concerns the extent to which teachers should pre-specify objectives for the class or for individual students. Perhaps the most salient feature of conventional teaching is that the teacher (or curriculum committee) decides what is to be learned, when, and in what way. For efficiency, teachers usually make one such set of decisions for each class, and all students are equally ruled by them. In recent years, however, and for various reasons this teacher dominated approach has been challenged by many critics. Herbert R. Kohl speaks of conventional, neatly ordered lesson plans as "traps for teachers" based on an unrealistic view of how people learn.

There is no one way to learn nor are there specific stories or experiments all young people must go through. The notion that learning is orderly and ought to be identical for all pupils is wrong and in many ways pernicious.<sup>12</sup>

Carl Rogers argues that in a rapidly changing society the fixed, content-centered curriculum simply doesn't make sense and that the only rational educational goal is the creation of independent students who know how to learn on their own.

The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn, the man who has learned how to adapt and change. Changingness, a reliance on process rather than upon static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world.<sup>13</sup>

Rogers suggests that the best teaching for today's students is teaching To free curiosity, to permit individuals to go charging off in new directions dictated by their own interests, to unleash the sense of inquiry, to open everything to questioning and exploration.<sup>14</sup>

Like other teachers, these advocates of more informal open education have a vision of objectives for their students. Among other things, they want students to become involved in decision making and inquiry, objectives that can be stated behaviorally. The teacher employing the open education approach must still find ways to stimulate interest and foster inquiry, to make alternatives known and available to the learner, and to serve as a resource person and learning facilitator, but he places trust in the student's ability to choose and learn on his own and for himself. Teachers sympathetic to this approach will be chary of developing objectives which require all

12 *The Open Classroom* (New York: New York Review Book Series, 1970) p. 52.

13 *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1969) p. 104.

14 *Ibid.* p. 105.



students to gain the same knowledge or skills in the same way. Even if they cannot provide the degree of freedom some theorists advise, they will still be more concerned with providing alternatives and stimulating personal inquiry than with covering a particular syllabus.

## ESTABLISHING CLASSROOM CLIMATE

The classroom climate is the general tone of a class. It reflects the totality of all the actions, relationships, and physical aspects of the environment as perceived by the students and the teacher. Although it is probably the most important of the teacher's immediate classroom concerns, it is hardest to define exactly and therefore is usually expressed in subjective terms conveying an impressionistic feeling about the class as friendly, business-like, chaotic, regimented, exciting, secure, dull, or permissive.

The psychological environment of the classroom, although not precisely an aspect of planning, is extremely important to it for several reasons. First, the existing climate will have a major influence on the success or failure of particular plans. An uncooperative class in an environment bordering on chaos will provide an inappropriate setting for an extended discussion or lecture on Dickens' prose style, and a tense class will not be particularly receptive to a discussion of comma faults. Second, the rapport a teacher initially establishes with his students will influence his subsequent work with them. Whatever other objectives or activities he may have in mind, his initial plans must reflect a concern for the class as a class.

As has been said previously, teachers do not have to be authoritarian task masters who never smile until Christmas, but they must be prepared to meet students' expectations and to provide initial direction. Secondary school students usually expect the teacher to take charge, exert authority, and tell them what to do. Therefore, even if he hopes to have students assume responsibility for themselves or to go charging off in new directions dictated by their own interests, the teacher first will have to create an environment in which these things can happen. Until he has taught students to work independently and cooperatively and to accept responsibility for their own education, the teacher cannot abdicate his responsibility to lead. The best (and the worst) learning environments do not happen without the teacher's help.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING CLIMATE** Most teachers today say they prefer an informal and friendly classroom climate, one that is orderly and courteous, one that creates voluntary student interest, involvement, and work without reliance on force, harsh discipline, and

rigid requirements. Often however a teacher's attempts to create such a climate are frustrated by his failure to understand the effects of his methods and rationale on students. For example teachers are often unaware of how much they talk and how little they listen. Students observing this behavior and thinking that learning means listening are unlikely to value or understand the suggestion that they accept more responsibility for the class or that they become more actively involved.

By structuring the physical environment and course of study, by the way he acts toward students and by his influence on the psychological environment the teacher determines the classroom climate whether he does so purposefully or inadvertently. There is probably no way that the limited space and facilities of a classroom can become an ideal physical learning environment for every student assigned to it. There will always be students who would prefer the auto shop, the gym, or their favorite street corner. Nevertheless most classrooms could be much more interesting and stimulating places than they are. An attractive classroom containing a variety of materials and arranged to promote student-teacher interaction will contribute to a more informal, cooperative atmosphere.

Except for the small group of students who intend to become English majors, much of the traditional subject matter of English is of somewhat less than compelling concern. With all but the most docile and school-oriented students, it is extremely difficult to get people to learn things they see as uninteresting and irrelevant. Therefore if the course of study is narrowly defined as a fixed body of knowledge and skills, it can detrimentally affect the classroom climate. Instead of thinking more broadly, many teachers discipline and threaten failure practices which are unlikely to enhance the classroom atmosphere. If teachers are permitted to do so, the alternative of reunifying the curriculum around basic human concerns instead of splitting it into traditional subjects can be effective. As the late John DeBoer suggested:

To me a more satisfactory organizing principle is the body of human anxieties and aspirations. The issues about which students in English classes should communicate are psychological, social, political, ethical, moral, aesthetic, international. These are issues with which young people are struggling, often at the cost of denision by their middle class parents.<sup>15</sup>

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15. *The New English in Language and Teaching: Essays in Honor of W. Wilbur Hatfield*, ed. Virginia McDavid (Chicago: Chicago State College, 1969), p. 30.

The way students are asked to learn also affects the classroom climate Kenneth A. Bruffee has pointed out that

classroom learning has become irrelevant [not] because the subject matter we feel students should learn is irrelevant to human life but because the way we require our students to learn is irrelevant to modern life.<sup>16</sup>

Bruffee contends that in the real world people learn collaboratively working together and interacting in ways which promote individual growth and feelings of worth and accomplishment. In the classroom however students are usually isolated from and in competition with each other. By emphasizing and promoting interaction among students through such activities as role playing and group projects the teacher can work to create a learning community in which all individuals can participate and contribute. When student talk and interaction are seen as contributing to their growth in language use and understanding much of their natural behavior appears useful and necessary rather than disruptive.

In conventional classes especially, the nature of the verbal interaction between teachers and students has an important effect on the classroom climate. The widely used system of interaction analysis developed by Ned A. Flanders assumes a teacher dominated classroom and stresses teacher talk more than student talk but it provides a useful frame for looking at verbal behavior in many classrooms. The Flanders system codes all classroom talk according to the following scale

Teacher talk	Indirect influence	1	Accepts feeling of student
		2	Praises or encourages
		3	Accepts or uses ideas of student
		4	Asks questions
	Direct influence	5	Lectures
		6	Gives directions
		7	Criticizes student behavior or justifies teacher's authority
Student talk		8	Student talk response to teacher
		9	Student talk initiated by student
Silence/Confusion		10	Silence or confusion <sup>17</sup>

16 "The Way Out" *College English* 33 (Jan 1972) 462

17 See E. J. Amidon and Ned A. Flanders *The Role of the Teacher in the Classroom* (Minneapolis: Paul S. Amidon and Associates, 1963) for further information about the Flanders system and its uses.

Among other things a Flanders analysis can tell a teacher how much of the time he talks and the kind of talking he does. In general teachers who exert indirect more often than direct influence have greater student interaction and more interesting classes.

**TEACHER STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS** The teacher himself and how he relates to students is probably the most important facet of classroom climate. Carl Rogers has identified three crucial teaching qualities which help to facilitate learning in others: realness, acceptance and trust, and empathic understanding.<sup>18</sup> A teacher who is a real person to his students expresses himself openly and honestly, avoids methods he does not believe in, and refuses to present a facade to students, pretending to know when he doesn't, pretending to be interested when he is not, or arguing that something is important to know when he personally believes it to be trivial.

A teacher who can prize, accept and trust others, cares for and values them as individuals and is willing to trust them to assume responsibility for themselves without judging their faults or analyzing their weaknesses and strengths. As Rogers says:

If I distrust the human being then I must cram him with information of my own choosing lest he go his own mistaken way. But if I trust the capacity of the human individual for developing his own potentiality then I can provide him with many opportunities and permit him to choose his own way and his own direction in his learning.<sup>19</sup>

Empathic understanding provides sensitivity to the student's point of view, the ability to see a situation or experience through his eyes. The teacher who can relate to his students as a real person, accepting without judging them, trusting and understanding them, will promote a healthy classroom climate. As Thomas D. Klein says:

it is the way the teacher behaves rather than what he does that is most important—his honesty about himself, his ability to encourage personal learning, his willingness to participate in the activities that are agreed upon, and his ability to be flexible.<sup>20</sup>

The general psychological environment of the classroom results from many forces, but the teacher's is a major one. Teachers may increase interpersonal defensiveness and fear by stressing competition.

18 *Freedom to Learn* pp 106-14

19 *Ibid* p 114

20 *Personal Growth in the Classroom* Dartmouth Dixon and Humanistic Psychology *English Journal* 59 (Feb 1970) 242.

threatening failure, or publicly criticizing students. Teachers may stifle students' desire to say what they think and feel, if they only accept 'right answers' or fail to listen to students at all. A teacher may devastate students' feelings of self-worth and attitudes of self-criticism and self-evaluation by showing that only his evaluation by external 'objective' criteria counts. Although most teachers want students to be self-disciplined and to respect themselves and others, they may inadvertently discourage such qualities by imposing arbitrary rules and encouraging competitive isolation.

Teachers who possess the qualities cited by Carl Rogers and who utilize them are likely to promote a healthy psychological environment in their classrooms. Among other things, such a teacher will probably

- listen to students,
- accept and respond to what they say,
- avoid censoring their thoughts and feelings,
- reduce the pressure to produce within narrow time limits,
- encourage student self-evaluation,
- tolerate errors, mistakes and false starts,
- encourage cooperation more than competition,
- de-emphasize grading and other public evaluation not intended as personal feedback to the student,
- deal directly with students' expressed concerns, and
- assist and participate in learning rather than merely direct the learning of others.

## PRINCIPLES OF PLANNING

Beginning teachers and student teachers are often concerned with very practical planning problems. What do I do on the first day and in the first week? What do I do if I run out of lesson material before the period ends? How much time should I allow for the study of *Moby-Dick* or *A Separate Peace*? How can I make commas interesting? How can I get through *Great Expectations* when half the class reads at a third-grade level and the other half refuses to do any work? Should I spend a few days leading up to the novel or plunge right in? Legitimate as such questions are, no easy answers can be given without specific knowledge of the situation. Still, some principles can be followed, if practical. Obviously, it does little good to know that literature should be appropriate to the student if the teacher must teach a conspicuously inappropriate selection. However, when course content is mandated, the teacher can still achieve some flexibility through those planning variables over which he does have control. For example, it may be possible for students to see the film *Great Expectations*.

tions or to hear a good storyteller summarize the plot for them so that class time can be devoted to reading discussing or acting out key scenes from the novel

Teachers can use the following five principles as a planning guide and their criteria as the structure for evaluating those plans which have not yet been tested in the classroom

**VALUE** Will the class or unit envisioned in this plan be worthwhile for the students? Can the teacher really justify to himself asking students to do what the plan suggests? Can he justify it to others? Will the class or its outcome really make a difference to these students? Will it be perceived as significant to their own purposes? For example is there any point in *teaching literary terminology to students before they have developed any interest in reading or talking about literature?* Is the textbook chapter on paragraphing likely to make much difference to a student who hasn't yet been motivated to write more than occasional sentence fragments?

**APPROPRIATENESS** Are the objectives, materials and procedures appropriate for these students at this time and in this situation? Given the students' expectations abilities, and interests, and the time space and materials available, is this a realistic plan with reasonable chances of producing learning? Will the present class climate permit this plan to work or must the climate be changed first? Asking students to form groups and to 'discuss the theme of this poem' is probably an inappropriate activity for a class which has not done much group work, the assignment is too unstructured and invites confusion *Hamlet* is not an appropriate assignment for a class of nonreaders even if they do happen to be in twelfth grade

**FLEXIBILITY** Does the plan provide for the fact that students learn in different ways and at different rates and that not all students need to learn the same things at the same time? Does the plan provide for alternative paths to the objective as well as for alternative rates of progress? Does it reflect consideration of the various ways the lesson or unit might develop in the classroom? Is there room in the plan for individuals or groups to explore and follow up their interests in their own ways? Although few teachers have the time and energy to develop separate plans for every student most teachers could provide more choices and options than they do At the very least students who demonstrate an interest in and capacity for independent work should be encouraged to pursue it

**ACTIVITY AND INVOLVEMENT** Is the proposed class or unit likely to involve students in active learning rather than passive ac-

ceptance? Does the plan provide or suggest a clear picture of what students will be doing? Are student activities varied and interesting? Is the plan likely to stimulate student-initiated learning (student questions, voluntary contributions to discussion, or other activities)? Have students been directly involved in the planning or has the teacher at least considered their previous reactions and comments in developing the plan? Especially when planning whole class activities, it is a good idea to plan two or three different things to do in the class period. Even the best lecture or discussion can become tiring if carried on too long.

**EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK** Unit and long-term plans especially, should include some outcome evaluation and some recognition of the students' reactions to the procedures used. Will the proposed evaluation (a test for instance) actually measure the objectives the teacher has proposed? What criteria does the teacher have for evaluating the lessons themselves?

## ADVANCE PLANNING

Schools, classes and circumstances differ, and the teacher's control over elements that influence student learning will vary considerably. Consequently, student and beginning teachers must often do some of their planning in the dark. Community pressure may preclude the use of particular books or the consideration of certain controversial topics; supplementary reading materials, films, or items such as tape recorders may be difficult to obtain; the library may be inaccessible during certain class periods; the cooperating teacher or department chairman may frown on innovative methods such as creative dramatics or may resist any attempts to stray from or supplement the established course of study. Obviously, planning for an unfamiliar situation is hazardous, and it takes some experience in the system to know which of the many teaching variables are under the teacher's control.

**VARIABLES TO CONSIDER** The following check list includes some of the more common variables a teacher can consider in his planning when and where he meets his students: what is available in the classroom; how the classroom is arranged; what the classroom climate is; what students are asked to do; what students are permitted to do; what the teacher does; and how students are evaluated. By studying these variables the teacher can generate and examine some possible alternative paths to the objectives he wishes to reach and can identify some of the information he should try to obtain about his particular teaching situation. Some teachers vary classroom procedures fre-

quently merely to keep students entertained or to impress others with their "creativity." Such window-dressing often leads to fragmentation rather than to improved learning. Perhaps more frequently, however, teachers allow their classes to fall into a predictable routine, inappropriate both to their own objectives and the different learning styles of their students. Variety is not an end in itself, but neither is routine.

When and where the teacher meets his students. Usually, teachers meet students in assigned classrooms during assigned class periods, but he may also see them in the community and in other parts of the school. Libraries, movies, legitimate theaters, newspaper offices, television or radio studios, bookstores, a local writer's studio, an advertising firm, a college composition or speech class, or an adult literary group might offer possible sites for exploring the uses and effects of language. One class studying *To Kill a Mockingbird* visited a local courthouse to observe a trial in progress, a class studying communication problems might visit a meeting of a local human relations council. The school library, gymnasium, or stage might be used for some class activities or for individuals and groups working on projects.

What is available in the classroom. Except in extremely impoverished schools materials for class use need not be limited to textbooks, single anthologies or required selections. Even in poor schools, teachers can use the resources of the students' own experiences and use of language. Among the materials and resources to consider for use in the classroom are:

**Hardware.** This would include slide and film projectors (films can be shown into boxes and viewed by small groups without having to darken the entire room), tape recorders and record players with individual earphones for private listening, paperback book display racks, work tables, magazine racks, a typewriter, and file cabinets for student work and records.

**Displays and stimulus materials.** Student-constructed mobiles on literary themes (Ahab and whales, Hester's A's) may be hung from the ceiling, collages, student writing, photographs of class activities, illustrated poems, or shooting scripts for film-projects can fill bulletin boards, sets of activity cards, individualized programmed materials (such as SRA reading kits), old anthologies, and lists of films and slides may be available from the materials center, sets of paperback books for group readings, records, posters, tape-recorded essays, newspaper clippings and pictures may stimulate writing or discussion.

**People.** The students themselves, their parents, guest speakers (local radio personalities, writers, attorneys, clergymen, and policemen, people whose work involves them in communication problems) provide ready sources.



Obviously, students do not need gross environmental stimuli all the time, they can and do learn from discussion and conventional class activities which do not require special surroundings. But different materials appealing to a variety of senses can stimulate the various learning styles of students. Considering all of the potential materials that can be used in the study of English, there is little reason today for such skimpy choices as are found in most classrooms even in affluent schools. Compared to the nonschool environment of most teen-agers, most classrooms are sterile and unattractive places.

How the classroom is arranged. Even if a teacher is in a classroom for only one period each day, he can usually rearrange desks easily and reorder them at the end of the hour. If a teacher has his own classroom, the number of desks may be reduced, work tables brought in, and considerable flexibility achieved. (Establishing friendly relations with the administrators who schedule classes, other teachers who use the room, and custodians can help overcome potential problems.) Flexible seating arrangements and use of space can help to facilitate different activities and to influence the classroom atmosphere. Desks may be placed into a circle for discussions, arranged in two large groups facing each other for debates, grouped or pushed to one side for project work or dramatic activities. The common arrangement of chairs in rows is perhaps itself an invitation to conventional teaching. Likewise, a new seating arrangement for group work or workshops will both reflect and facilitate different kinds of learning.

What the classroom climate is. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the classroom climate will have a major effect on a teacher's plans and what happens to them in practice. Unlike some of the other variables, this psychological environment is never completely under the teacher's direct control, particularly on a day-to-day basis. He cannot rearrange attitudes, relationships, and impressions as easily as he can rearrange desks or assignments. Therefore, at the same time that he works to influence the climate, he must plan with the actual situation in mind.

What students are asked to do. However a course of study may appear in a teacher's mind or on paper in a curriculum guide or required textbook, in the classroom it becomes a series of activities that students are asked—or required or encouraged—to perform. Both the activities themselves and the degree to which they are teacher-invented are important variables in planning. Among the most frequent things students are asked to do in English class are the following:

to listen to the teacher, answer the teacher's questions, read (aloud or silently) selections the teacher has chosen, write themes, talk

about things the teacher wants discussed solve problems or answer questions (alone or in groups) posed by the teacher or the textbook observe films demonstrations or other presentations and make presentations to a group or the class

Among other activities which teachers may ask students to do are

to make decisions about what they want to study and how to go about it participate in creative dramatics ask questions of the teacher or other students listen to other students make films collages or other non verbal expressions tape record essays or interpretations of literature talk or lead discussions on topics they have chosen for themselves solve problems they have identified for themselves and seek information they personally want to have

The old saying that experience keeps a dear [expensive] school has been transformed by modern theorists to Experience keeps the only school If students are to learn they must be involved in learning experiences Listening and reading both can be profitable learning experiences if the speaker or writer is engrossing and the audience is involved But if students are disinterested and indifferent the only learning they will do is to learn that school is a pretty boring affair Especially when lecturing teachers should be very attentive to feed back from the students are they actively listening or are they merely tolerating the talk? It does little good for the teacher to get through the material however important if he is not getting through to his students

What students are permitted to do When performing activities not directly related to a particular course of study students may be granted varying degrees of freedom in their use of time in their movement in the classroom and around the school and in their interactions with other students Teachers who try to control the entire class time of all of their students by enforcing strict rules concerning movement and noise often reduce student to student interaction to a minimum Although some rules may be necessary especially for the beginning teacher often they are quite arbitrary and tend to become ends in themselves Thus many teachers find more and more of their time and energy being taken up in maintaining control Furthermore if a pattern is set whereby students are never permitted to talk except when called upon and if few freedoms exist in the classroom it will be difficult to get students to engage in profitable discussions group work or in such activities as role playing

What the teacher does How a teacher uses his time both before and during class can vary considerably For instance if he plans to lead a discussion rather than lecture or conduct a recitation session

he must spend time considering the possible avenues the discussion might take and devising questions which will open up these avenues and spark interest. Whether the teacher chooses discussion, recitation or lecture should depend on the effect of each on the classroom climate and on what students will do. Does the teacher want his students to listen, for instance? Then he will plan to lecture to the class.

Among the most common classroom activities of teachers are presenting or clarifying information (through lecture demonstration or showing a film)

assigning and directing student activities

arranging the environment

stimulating student activity or response (suggesting possibilities

asking questions, raising issues, provoking comment, encouraging initiative, providing support)

serving as a resource (answering questions, suggesting sources of information or procedures, clarifying issues or problems)

**How students are evaluated** In most cases, it is up to the teacher to determine whether his objectives have been achieved and how he will evaluate his students. Two key considerations in choosing the means of evaluation are their appropriateness to the teacher's objectives and their probable effects on the students and on the classroom climate.

The measurements a teacher uses to evaluate and grade students may or may not reflect the objectives he wants to promote and extensive use of rigorous, competitive, objective testing may create a pressure cooker classroom which inhibits learning rather than promotes high standards of achievement. Evaluation may be formal (tests, quizzes, graded assignments) or informal (comments, suggestions, and personal reactions to student work), public or private, objective (based on some set standard of achievement which the teacher subjectively values) or subjective (based on less precise factors such as personal improvement, industry, or willingness to participate), process-oriented (providing feedback to students as they are doing the work) or product oriented (based on the work itself or on terminal objectives). Teacher dominated (all judgments coming from the teacher) or peer and self-dominated (providing for feedback from other students and student self evaluation). The problems inherent in each of these methods of evaluation will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 9.

**STEPS IN ADVANCE PLANNING** Despite the difficulties of planning for unfamiliar situations, student and beginning teachers can make good use of the time before they enter the classroom. Some things they may profitably do are to

Obtain information about the teaching situation. What community pressures will appear? Are there lists of approved books that must be used? What is the school's calendar? Will a planned unit be interrupted by a vacation? What texts, supplementary literature, films and hardware are available? What special resources do the community and the school have? Are there any classroom and scheduling peculiarities? Are desks bolted down? How far is the room from the library? When is the teacher free to duplicate or collect materials? What are school and departmental policies regarding homework, grades and evaluation? What are the curriculum requirements and how are they enforced? how much freedom does the teacher have to adjust a course to himself and his students?

#### *Examine available texts and literary selections*

**Gather materials.** Once a teacher knows the grade and subject he will teach, he can begin collecting materials to aid in his plans—news paper articles or magazine pictures on a particular theme, for instance. He can track down appropriate records and films and can submit order requests. If he is to teach a particular literary selection or theme, the teacher may find it useful to construct in advance a media package containing at least five different types of material which relate to the subject to be taught and which can be used in class to stimulate discussion, enliven a presentation or spark a project: films, posters, musical selections, taped interviews, magazine articles, poems, photographs, paintings, slides or filmstrips.

**Prepare materials.** Poems can be typed on ditto masters and overhead projector transparencies prepared. Activity cards presenting a particular problem or exercise can be made up for use by individuals or small groups who finish required work early or as an alternative to whole class activities. Such a card might have on it a brief poem with some questions to be answered; it might ask a question which the student is to answer using some particular reference tool; it might require him to complete the last few lines of a brief dramatic dialogue or to write two statements which would apply equally well to two different selections—for instance to Yeats' poem "When You Are Old" and the Beatles' song "When I'm Sixty Four." Group cards may describe a word game for several people to play or may suggest a project such as preparing a shooting script for the film of a particular short story or making a taped interpretation of a poem or dramatic dialogue with appropriate background music and sound effects. Sample activity cards are provided in Appendix D of this text.

**Increase a repertoire of possible class activities and methods.** Good teachers are always looking for new ideas, interesting activities and materials, and novel ways to stimulate interest in their subject.

Reading *The English Journal* and other NCTE publications, general methods texts, *Media and Methods*, and other professional publications is a good way to increase ideas and to stimulate creativity. Most college libraries contain curriculum materials from various sources which may provide inspiration for different ways of organizing and teaching English.

**Observe and talk with teachers and students** The more opportunities the new teacher has to visit schools, observe and work with different teachers and to meet with students in formal and informal situations, the better prepared he will be both to plan for and to face the realities of teaching. Especially those teachers who have had little or no contact with teenagers since they themselves were in school should find ways to meet, work, and talk with young people. Church groups, community youth organizations, and scouting all provide opportunities for informal talk, and directors of such programs are usually eager to use volunteer help. Working on extracurricular school activities can also provide a needed perspective for teachers. In the classroom, it is easy to forget that there is more to Johnny than the slow, quiet student in third period English.

**Develop tentative plans and a calendar** Even if the new teacher is given little information in advance, he should have some materials and fairly specific activities prepared for his first few classes. New teachers who do not have anything more specific than "introduction" and "outline objectives and procedures" written in their plans often find themselves talking nervously and seemingly endlessly to increasingly bored and listless students. Plans can always be adjusted to the situation or can be abandoned entirely, but it is sometimes difficult to generate an interesting activity on the spur of the moment, particularly if the moment is one's first facing a class of thirty teenagers.

## PLANNING PROCEDURES

However much time and thought a teacher devotes to the various concerns and questions introduced in this chapter, sooner or later he will have to commit himself to a particular course of action. He will have to decide what materials to take to tomorrow's class, how to arrange the chairs, what to do first, and what questions to ask. He might arrive at such decisions through a sequence such as the following:

- 1 He might determine appropriate objectives for the particular class,
- 2 select materials and activities which will promote his ends

- 3 arrange the lessons or their parts logically and
- 4 determine how to tell if his objectives have been met

However few teachers seem to plan in such a logical fashion. Many experienced teachers consider these items rather informally and in random order.

A lesson plan may begin with an idea for particular activities or assignments which seem likely to interest the class. It may begin with a body of subject matter the teacher hopes to cover, some general themes or issues he wants students to think about and discuss, or even with some notion of the kind of test the teacher plans to give. Some teachers draw up a tentative calendar for an entire semester roughly blocking out the time to be spent on various skills, literary selections, or thematic units. Others prepare a specific detailed syllabus for the entire course at the outset, and still others refuse to commit themselves to any plan extending beyond the first few days until they have met their students and taken stock of the situation.

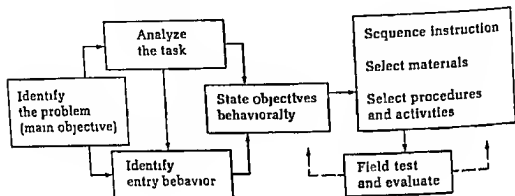
Preparing specific plans is often very much like writing a composition. Faced with an empty calendar and a great many possibilities (or perhaps no ideas at all) where shall the teacher begin? As in writing a composition, the teacher may prepare himself by stockpiling as many ideas as possible using the procedures and questions that have already been introduced in this chapter. As in writing, the teacher may discover what he wants to do in the course of planning. In jotting down questions to ask about a novel, for instance, he may suddenly discover a new and interesting way to approach the work. In reading through a chapter in the grammar book, he may stumble on a linguistic notion which students might actually be willing to discuss. His first rough plan may only be an unsorted mass of possibilities to be used if it seems desirable, a series of notes and ideas arranged in some loose sequence, a calendar blocked out to schedule all the material he hopes to touch on, or it may consist only of a set of starter ideas and exercises intended to stimulate students to begin to work independently.

**SYSTEMATIC PLANNING** Despite the seemingly haphazard ways that teachers go about planning, at some point they do follow each of the four logical steps suggested earlier, even if they do so unconsciously. The beginning teacher may find it useful to consider each of these steps more systematically, if for no other reason than to be sure that he has in fact touched all the bases.

He may wish to use a systems approach similar to that used by writers of programmed textbooks. Because this approach has been used extensively in solving industrial and engineering problems, it

may seem overly mechanistic to many English teachers. However, it is only a technique to facilitate consideration of all the facets of a complicated problem by breaking it down into manageable parts. The following model represents the approach in its simplest form.

FIGURE 3 1 Systems Approach Model



The following example illustrates the application of the model to a planning problem: teaching a Shakespearean play to a class that has never studied Shakespeare.

1. **Identify the problem.** Just what is to be accomplished? Although a teacher may begin with a very general problem, the more specifically he can define his objectives, the more likely he will be to achieve them. If he begins with the problem of teaching students to read Shakespeare, he must then decide what he is really after. Is his main object an appreciation of Shakespeare's use of language or his dramatic artistry? Does he wish his students to gain the ability to read Shakespearean prose and poetry, an understanding of the relationship of Shakespearean drama to students' lives today? Although each of these objectives is important and related, each may be approached in different ways. Appreciation might be fostered by seeing a film, for example, whereas the ability to read Elizabethan English might be developed by first examining and paraphrasing particularly easy passages or some of the sonnets.
2. **Analyze the task and identify entry behavior.** What must the student be able to do in order to accomplish the desired objectives? The teacher must consider what is involved in reading a Shakespearean play. He might start by listing the requirements

for successful performance of various parts of the task perhaps beginning with the basic and obvious—the ability to read reasonably well knowledge that a name followed by a colon indicates the speaker—and then breaking down the requirements for more complicated large tasks—the ability to read Shakespearean prose with some fluency—into simpler terms that seem more manageable Without becoming unduly specific the teacher can see five main task areas which may pose problems for his students their basic reading skills the difficulty of Shakespearean English their general play reading ability—the ability to visualize action and to hear the dialogue—their attitude toward old literature and their familiarity with the problem or subject matter dealt with in the play A student's entry behavior is composed of those skills he is assumed to have when he begins it offers one important indication of the appropriateness of a particular selection For example if students are notably deficient in basic reading skills the actual reading of a Shakespearean play will be an inappropriate starting objective

- 3 State objectives behaviorally What student behavior will the teacher accept as evidence that they have done the various sub tasks and have achieved the main objectives? Here the teacher should consider again just what he is after and how he will know whether he is succeeding If a student says that he doesn't like the play is it because he is unable to read it? What measures will indicate if this is the case? Does the student dislike this particular play, or is his attitude part of a general dislike of any old literature?
- 4 Sequence instruction Given the various tasks which should the teacher initiate first? Would it be better to spend some time on language first? Is student antagonism so great that their attitude must be a primary concern? Once the teacher has identified the various problems confronting him he can decide which will probably need separate attention and which can be lumped together to be dealt with while reading the play
- 5 Select materials What does the teacher need in order to help student achievement? This step might include the selection of the play itself a decision based on considerations such as which play would be easiest to read and which would be most likely to interest students in Shakespeare If students have difficulty visualizing the action of a play a teacher might get some pictures of actual performances Are there supplementary literary selections which would generate preliminary interest in the themes of the play? Are good films recordings or filmstrips available?
- 6 Select procedures and activities What should the teacher ask students to do in order to achieve the objectives he has specified? At



this point, the teacher's imagination his knowledge of the students, and his repertoire of methods gleaned from reading observation and experience are crucial

- 7 Field test and evaluate Does the plan work, do students actually achieve the objectives? Although most teachers never use precisely the same plan twice, it is useful to learn where plans fail and what might be done differently the next time

**PLANNING AS SHORTHAND** The actual written lesson plan is for many teachers a kind of shorthand memo reminding them briefly of procedures and activities they have thought out much more fully For example a note in a plan book may say only

Word collage success failure

Read and discuss Ex Basketball Player <sup>21</sup>

Objective Discuss success failure in poem relate to personal concepts

The teacher knows that he will begin with a brief discussion of what a collage is and what a word collage might be He might then ask students to create a sample word collage on a topic like school Having established what a word collage is he might then ask students to create two related collages on the topics success and failure

At this point in the lesson the teacher may have an important choice to make If students contribute eagerly and become involved in developing the collages themselves, a discussion based on them and on general feelings of success and failure may consume the rest of the class period If he wants to move on to Updike's poem however he may eventually try to steer the conversation toward the idea of has-beens and former successes

At some point he will pass out copies of the poem He may then read the poem aloud or perhaps have a student read it aloud and give everyone a chance to read it through silently If no comments or questions arise spontaneously or if discussion seems to drag the teacher may suggest some activity such as having everyone write out one or two statements which the students believe to be true about the poem and which contain the words success or failure Alternatively, he may prod the discussion with questions designed to illustrate the relationship between the poem and the topics of the word collage or to determine if the basketball player is truly a failure The teacher may wish to allow the discussion to take its own direction perhaps eventually leading students to consider their own impressions of people as successful or unsuccessful or their empathic understanding of the people in the poem The amount of direction the teacher needs to give to the discussion will usually depend on the degree of student involvement and

21 A poem by John Updike

what the teacher is trying to accomplish. If he is using the lesson as a bridge to another literary work such as Tennyson's *Ulysses*, Irwin Shaw's *The Eighty Yard Run*, or Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, he may try to guide the conversation more actively than he would if he just wants students to explore the way a poet deals with a general topic by particularizing it.

At any rate, the lesson as it actually happens in the classroom will be much more complicated than a brief lesson plan would indicate. If the teacher is attentive and self-confident enough to exploit the various learning opportunities which will occur during the class period and if he has considered in advance the particular activities he will use—the way he will introduce word collages, possible questions to ask about the poem, alternative activities if discussion is difficult—those cryptic notes in the plan book will probably be sufficient. On the other hand, if the teacher comes into class with no ideas beyond asking students to write down words associated with success and failure, passing out the poem and asking some questions about it, he may be courting disaster. A poorly prepared teacher could zip through this lesson plan in about five minutes, leaving all the rest of the class period to fill with a rambling lecture, a sequence of poorly considered questions, or a hastily devised assignment to keep the students occupied and quiet.

## LESSON PLANS AND UNITS

**DAILY LESSON PLANS** Student teachers are often required to prepare written lesson plans for their supervisors' inspection, and in many schools teachers' plans are checked weekly by the department chairman or some administrator. These daily or weekly plans take various forms. Lesson plan books provided by schools usually are structured by class and day and require a summary statement of the topic to be covered, necessary materials, objectives, activities, and methods, evaluation, and assignments.

As was mentioned in the preceding section, beginners may benefit from writing out rather detailed plans, if only as a kind of exercise, because such plans often reveal weaknesses which can be corrected before the teacher actually tries to use the plan in the classroom. For example, the following plan developed by a prospective student teacher for his first teaching day with high school sophomores reveals several potential trouble spots:

MONDAY Avg 10th gr 28 students 3d hr

1. Introduction explain my expectations and answer questions
2. Discuss plans for next 6 weeks Julius Caesar poetry unit grammar paragraphing

### 3 Grammar text Chapter 10 Discuss four types of paragraphs and assign first exercise for Tues

The first two items in this plan will probably take only five or ten class minutes and may be rather dull and rambling as well. If the teacher is lucky the students will have some questions to ask and he may be able to transform his expectations into a fascinating account. However the likelihood is that students will find his talk somewhat less than compelling. The teacher then plans to give his students some work (which is generally a good idea on the first day). However the topic of paragraph types will probably not in itself arouse much student enthusiasm which means that lecture will probably replace discussion. Will he be able to generate an interesting lecture on the topic? Will he merely tell students to read the text? How many minutes will that take? Can he devise some activity on a moment's notice which will lead students to understand the topic? Awareness of these problems does not solve them of course but until this teacher puts his plans on paper he may not even see the problems he will face.

One of the potential teaching problems which often becomes evident in inexperienced teachers' written plans is planning an entire class period around a discussion with no materials—dittoes, records, films, texts—to fall back on if the discussion fails to materialize. Starting a discussion of a potentially interesting selection with the questions least likely to generate any response or enthusiasm is also a frequent mistake. For instance asking an eighth grade class to discuss the relative merits of printed song lyrics and the lyrics incorporated into the music is a topic the teacher, not the students, would like to discuss. Beginning teachers often fail to consider what questions or activities might generate enough interest among adolescents to spark a discussion or plan to discuss a topic about which students won't have much to say. Just how much does the average teenager have to contribute about complex sentences? The teacher may make assignments which students are unable to do, such as requiring very reluctant readers to bring their favorite poems to class the next day. He may also make erroneous assumptions about students' attitudes or home life and may, for instance, try to base an entire lesson on students' discussion of why their parents object to rock music, long hair, and the students' political views when this is not the case. Beginning teachers, like experienced ones, often operate very well on sketchy plans but many of the common problems they face can be identified and corrected ahead of time if they do some detailed planning and invite comments from an experienced teacher or supervisor.

**SEMESTER AND COURSE PLANS** Most teachers have at least a general plan for each semester's work, if not for the entire year. Al

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though particular details may not be filled in too far in advance such plans help to avoid scheduling problems (like starting David Copperfield two days before spring vacation or planning a major exam the morning after a big dance) insure that required material is included in some reasonable sequence and remind the teacher to request materials such as sets of books or films sufficiently in advance. Student teachers who must cover particular material should obtain a school calendar and block out the approximate time they intend to devote to various activities. Even though such rough plans usually need to be adjusted they do provide a useful perspective and an awareness of time limits.

**UNITS** Semesters are frequently divided into units consisting of related lessons skill development or topics. Such units may require several days to several months. Like lesson plans unit plans usually include a title or topic which may be expanded to a general descriptive overview objectives (skills concepts and attitudes stated behaviorally when appropriate) lists of materials content and subject matter (texts supplementary readings non print media resources) proposed activities and methods a calendar or study guide giving the sequence of lessons evaluation procedures and a bibliography and list of materials for the teacher's use. In planning a unit particular care must be taken to develop initial activities which introduce the unit in a way that will stimulate student interest.

In Chapter 6 several ways of organizing literature units are explained in the sections Planning the Literature Program and Organizing the Literature Program. Therefore for purposes of illustration only one type of unit will be discussed at this point the thematic unit. These units are devoted to the exploration of a general topic such as humor heroes the generation gap confinement or man against himself. (Further suggestions for thematic units are listed in Appendix C.) This type of unit encompassing a wide range of projects and activities which may be performed individually in groups or by the class allows considerable latitude both to teacher and students. Since various skills and content can be integrated into a unit it often serves to reduce the artificial fragmentation which occurs when courses are organized by skills and content alone with for instance spelling on Monday grammar on Tuesday and Wednesday literature on Thursday and Friday. However possible problems arise if students are bored by or hostile to the theme itself. The theme may become a hindrance to student initiated work. For instance how should the teacher handle a student who becomes intensely interested in Mark Twain in the middle of a unit on animals?

Commercially prepared thematic units generally place major emphasis on literature and introduce related writing assignments and

particular skills at various points. Such units are usually very highly structured and provide little room for student incentive. They generally begin with whole-class reading and discussion of works introducing the topic, proceed to small group reading within the topic, and finally to individual reading and writing related to the topic.

As implied previously, the teacher who selects his units from such packages or develops his own should pay particular attention to his choice of theme or topic, choosing one that relates to basic student concerns and interests and encompasses a wide range of appropriate literature and possible student activities.

He may also select learning activity packages designed for individual or small group use. These packages also are constructed around themes, skills, or particular content. However, they may be highly structured and programmatic or open-ended, and may contain a collection of stimulus materials or some suggested activities. Although such packages differ widely, they usually include an overview and statement of objectives, some form of pre- and post-package self-evaluation and a final student evaluation of some kind, varied and stimulating materials, and suggested activities intended to help students achieve the package's objectives. Such packages have become increasingly popular in recent years as a means of accommodating individual differences in the classroom.<sup>22</sup>

**ELECTIVES** As more school programs include electives, teachers may also have the opportunity to suggest and develop short courses that they would like to teach. To do so, they should select a subject matter area or thematic topic in which they are interested and prepare and submit a general course proposal for approval. This proposal usually will include a title for the course, the topic or skill area, reasons for offering the course, general objectives, proposed content and materials, and some indication of methods. Once a course has been approved, the teacher can make more specific plans using the procedures suggested in this chapter.

## LEARNING TO PLAN

As this chapter suggests, competency in planning involves considerable background knowledge, sensitivity, and judgment. The proof of competency, however, is in doing the job required: planning in ways which produce the desired results in the classroom. A teacher

<sup>22</sup> For specific suggestions on how to develop such packages, see Richard V. Jones Jr., "Learning Activity Packages: An Approach to Individualized Instruction," *Journal of Secondary Education* 43 (Apr. 1968): 178-83.

cannot learn to do this only by reading chapters in a textbook but by planning and using his plans in teaching

It is possible however to learn some of the procedures and problems by doing exercises such as the following and having an experienced teacher comment on the results

To test his ability to consider and verbalize teaching objectives a teacher might select two personal teaching objectives and indicate his answers to questions 2 3 4 and 5 posed by members of the Portland system (pp 36-37)

To determine his familiarity with materials he might attempt to prepare a media package (p 53) to be used in teaching a particular novel or play to a particular grade He might choose a theme or topic which he believes will interest students of a particular age and select at least two novels two plays of different levels of difficulty and ten poems which could be used to develop consideration of the theme

To evaluate his ability to adjust plans to situations the prospective teacher might observe a particularly difficult class or group of students for a period of time and recommend ways to develop a better classroom climate What particular materials and methods might help improve the situation? What problems of learning and attitude must be considered in planning for this class?

To increase his facility in generating varied projects the teacher could devise a number of activity cards (p 53 and Appendix D) keyed to topics he is likely to teach to a particular grade level and materials he is likely to find in the classroom For example he might develop five cards for each of the following items suitable to a class of average ninth graders

One five copy set of *The Pigman* (or another contemporary junior novel)

One five copy set of poems by e e cummings

One Polaroid camera with film for ten pictures

One camera with film for twenty slides

One movie camera equipped with five minutes of film

One tape recorder with tapes

One record player with fifteen to twenty records of various types

One film projector and access to short films from a well stocked media center (see lists of short films in Appendix B)

A stack of photo magazines

A chalk board with colored chalk

Ten copies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

To evaluate his ability to solve particular teaching problems the teacher might devise plans to help five average sophomores who are continually confusing *their/there* or *its/its* in their writing might

plan a three-week poetry unit for a class of cooperative but apathetic sophomores; or plan in some detail the first week's work on *Julius Caesar* (or perhaps a Dickens novel) with a tenth-grade class of diverse abilities and interests which has never read Shakespeare or Dickens before.

Microteaching situations, although not exactly comparable to facing a class of secondary school students, offer opportunities to try out teaching techniques and to confront realistic planning problems. Given a small group of students and a specific time period, the teacher can attempt to achieve a limited objective or to demonstrate some particular teaching behavior such as giving directions, conducting a recitation session, lecturing, leading a discussion, or using certain questioning strategies. In such laboratory situations, the teacher can develop, demonstrate, and evaluate teaching skills in a relatively non-threatening atmosphere. For instance, the teacher can plan a lesson or group of lessons which will lead to the achievement of objectives such as the following: teaching students to follow given directions precisely in completing a worksheet without additional verbal assistance from the teacher, or following a lecture, finding that students can correctly identify the deep-structure sources of ambiguity in five sentences on an exercise sheet, or ensuring that at least two-thirds of the students will say something relevant during the discussion of a poem and that at least one-third will make one or more voluntary contributions. For purposes of skill development, microteaching objectives may also be stated in terms of teacher rather than student behavior. He may set as a goal sustaining a fifteen-minute discussion on the subject of "correct" usage while using only questions or yes and no responses.

Having selected his objectives, the teacher can plan his lesson, conduct a microclass, and determine whether his objectives were achieved. With the help of an observer-instructor, the students, and perhaps a video or audio tape of the class, he can also evaluate his plan and its execution.<sup>23</sup> Although microteaching situations are usually somewhat unrealistic, lacking such problems as student misbehavior and the inevitable classroom distractions, the planning itself has one

23 Evaluation of the teacher's verbal behavior in such situations can often be made more precise and helpful through the use of instruments such as the Flanders' Interaction Analysis discussed earlier in this chapter. For additional information on analysis of classroom talk see E. J. Amidon and M. M. Giammateo, "The Verbal Behavior of Super Teachers," *Elementary School Journal* 65 (1965) 283-85; E. Bentley and E. Miller, *Systematic Observation: The Reciprocal Category System* (Published monograph of the Supplementary Educational Center, Atlanta, Ga., 1971), and G. H. Henry, "Preparing Student Teachers for Teacher-Pupil Verbal Interaction in the English Classroom," *English Education* 4 (Spring 1973) 247-58.

very realistic aspect the time for the lesson will arrive and something will have to be done

In the chapters which follow various methods for dealing with the subject matter and objectives of secondary school English will be discussed. The concerns, principles and procedures introduced in this chapter are intended to help the beginning teacher cope with the particular problems of translating these objectives and methods and the teacher's own hopes and ideas into viable, useful and specific guides to action in the classroom.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Hook, J. N. "English Teachers in a World We Never Made." *English Journal* 58 (Feb. 1969): 185-92. Writing in response to the events of a trauma



matic year and particularly to the assassination of Martin Luther King Dr Hook suggests a useful guideline for any English teacher involved in planning The constant daily question must be Will what I am going to teach today make a difference?

Hook J N et al *Representative Performance Objectives for High School English A Guide for Teaching Evaluating and Curriculum Planning* New York Ronald 1971 This report of the Tri University Project on Behavioral Objectives in English contains a wealth of performance goals in six major areas of the curriculum

Kitzhaber Albert R *A Rage for Disorder* English Journal 61 (Nov 1972) 1199-1219 A thoughtful sane intense examination of present trends in English toward elective courses informal open education humanistic approaches and the like Kitzhaber reviews contemporary theories and advocates a more balanced approach synthesizing the new and the traditional (Another article questioning the new trends is Gene Picbes Romanticism Kitsch and New Era English Curriculums in the same issue of the Journal pp 1220-24)

Kohl Herbert *The Open Classroom* New York A New York Review Book 1969 Kohl in his brief chapter on syllabi and lesson plans argues against a single detailed plan for an entire class and advocates instead an anecdotal account of the possibilities inherent in particular literary selections and learning activities Instead of predetermining activities and goals the teacher is urged to anticipate what might happen and what kinds of questions or activities will stimulate student interest and promote profitable self directed learning activity Teachers trying to envision what open classrooms and schools are like should become familiar with the following works in addition to Kohl

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Rogers Carl *Freedom to Learn* Columbus Ohio Merrill 1969

Loban Walter Ryan Margaret and Squire James R *Teaching Language and Literature* New York Harcourt 1961 The Program and Plan section of this English methods text (pp 647-84) contains a number of specific useful suggestions for curriculum yearly unit and daily lesson planning. This text is particularly useful in suggesting ways to coordinate materials and

activities in support of particular predetermined objectives and provides a number of very detailed well developed anecdotal lesson plans

Mager Robert F *Preparing Instructional Objectives* Palo Alto Calif Fearon 1962 This readable witty little book teaches teachers to write very precise behavioral objectives in ways which are of questionable use for English teaching but which have had a great impact on educational thinking Mager's *Developing Attitude toward Learning* Fearon 1968 deals with increasing and measuring students' approach behavior toward a subject

Maxwell John *Behavioral Objectives for English* Some Pros and Cons Minnesota English Journal 6 (Fall 1970) 3-11 (Reprinted in T W Hipple's *Readings for Teaching English in Secondary Schools* New York Macmillan 1973 pp 72-80) Maxwell describes behavioral objectives what they are for and who is against them

Maxwell John C and Tovatt Anthony eds *On Writing Behavioral Objectives for English* Urbana Ill National Council of Teachers of English 1970 This is probably the finest introduction to the problems and issues surrounding the behavioral objectives controversy Articles include some of the best available on the subject and several provide help for the teacher trying to consider and write objectives for his own students (See also Henry B Maloney ed *Accountability and the Teaching of English* NCTE 1972)

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Squire James R. and Applebee Roger K *Teaching English in the United Kingdom* Urbana Ill National Council of Teachers of English 1969 This study offers teachers a detailed picture of an increasingly popular approach to the teaching of English which is quite different from that followed in most American schools

## ORAL LANGUAGE IN THE ENGLISH PROGRAM

Some teachers treat English as if it were a dead language one found only in written form. In their classrooms literature is taught as a collection of sacred artifacts; language is analyzed primarily through written exercises and textbooks and only the teacher is heard speaking aloud with any frequency or fluency. But although teachers still dominate the majority of classrooms, an increasing number are becoming aware of the central role that student talk and drama can play in students' language development.

As James Moffett points out, languages are symbol systems and when a student learns one of these systems he learns how to operate it. The main point is to think and talk about other things by means of this system. That is the primary function of the teacher is to promote student growth in and through language rather than teaching about it. Andrew Wilkinson contends that "The task of any teacher of English is the creation of situations in which language is the natural outcome."<sup>1</sup>

In this country even those English teachers who do provide such situations and opportunities for their students generally stress reading and writing much more than listening and speaking. American observers comparing British and American schools have noted that

the emphasis in England on speech situations, classroom conversation, interpretive speech and other oral activity as well as the acceptance of spoken English as basic to success in all other aspects of English contrasts sharply with oral activity in today's American secondary program. An examination of what the

1 *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) p. 6

2 "The Concept of Oracy," *English Journal* 59 (Jan. 1970): 74

British are doing in speech education reveals the poverty of such education in even our better schools<sup>3</sup>

Very few, if any, American English teachers give adequate attention to the role of spoken language in students' lives and learning, tending to leave oral language to the speech teacher and ignoring its potential for their own classes. American programs and classrooms are still primarily teacher and subject matter dominated, stressing analytical study and information rather than skill or performance, and emulating the artificial separation of the written and spoken language found in college English and speech departments.

In the real world of human discourse, however, English is alive and well and spoken language is of primary, not secondary, importance. Oral language belongs in the English program because it is so overwhelmingly important, in a very direct and practical sense to the lives of human beings. As Andrew Wilkinson says

Our communication is most of the time through speaking and listening and very little of the time through reading and writing and the less able our children are, the more this is true and will ever be true. Psychologists have led us to see how fundamental the spoken language is to the development, not only of the human ability to speak not only of the human ability to communicate, but the human ability to develop fully a personality, and to develop cognitively. Speech determines the level of our companionship the level at which our lives are lived.<sup>4</sup>

Wilkinson maintains that English teachers should be as concerned with "oracy"—(speaking and listening)—as they are with literacy, since the two are inseparable in real life. If we are to involve students in the living processes of verbalizing experience and experiencing verbalization, if we are to promote their growth through English we must be willing to acknowledge the importance of spoken language in human affairs.

#### PURPOSES OF ORAL LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH

Speech activities in the English program encourage students' growth and social competence by increasing their general facility with and understanding of language. Such activities generally are not intended to develop skills in formal public speaking or acting. Although particular objectives and priorities differ, most advocates

<sup>3</sup> James R. Squire and Roger K. Applebee. *Teaching English in the United Kingdom* (Urbana, Ill. NCTE 1969) p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> "The Concept of Oracy" *English Journal* 59 (Jan 1970) 73-74.

of increased student talk hope to improve communication, to encourage self-expression, to increase understanding and appreciation of spoken language and its effects or to make the classroom a livelier and more profitable learning environment

**TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION** The classroom provides ample evidence that communication and adequate self-expression do not follow automatically from the ability to speak or from formal education. In classrooms as elsewhere, people must contend with the various social and semantic problems arising from the use and abuse of talk. As James Britton of the University of London says

relationships between the members of a group are established partly by nonverbal signals but are largely dominated by and focused upon verbal signals and we must acknowledge the power of our speech to create and particularly to destroy, relationships of trust and goodwill.\*

The basic involvement of speech in human and social relationships is especially relevant to adolescents who are still struggling to establish their identity, to identify with particular groups or roles, and to find an appropriate niche for themselves. Communication with parents, teachers, other adults, brothers and sisters, friends, and competitors is a persistent practical problem for most students, as it is for many adults.

In the classroom teachers and students experience and see the effects of non-talkers and non-stop talkers (including teachers), people who, instead of communicating, engage in name calling or more subtle forms of verbal one-upmanship, those who intentionally or inadvertently make others feel uncomfortable when they talk, those who can't express themselves clearly or effectively and people (including teachers) who don't listen to others or who misinterpret what they say. When oral communication is accepted as a legitimate concern of the English class, such problems become subjects for study and discussion rather than embarrassments or impediments to lessons. When the teacher is sensitive and attentive to his own and his students' speech, the opportunities abound to ask, 'What's going on here? What are the effects of saying that likely to be? In what situations would such speech be inappropriate?

Improving communication involves moving speech toward goals. Andrew Wilkinson identifies as reciprocity, relevance, objectivity, and depth.<sup>5</sup> Reciprocity is the awareness of and sensitivity to other

5 Quoted in Squire and Applebee *Teaching English in the U.K.* p. 174

6 'The Concept of Oracy' *English Journal* 59 (Jan. 1970) 76

speakers and listeners and their rights and viewpoints. It follows from listening and responding to what others are saying rather than total absorption in one's own ideas or image. If a teacher models reciprocal behavior and can make his students aware of what he is doing, he may find them gradually learning to listen and respond to each other, as well as to him. Dramatic improvisation also helps to develop reciprocity by requiring students to listen carefully and react appropriately. Relevance involves focus on the task or topic at hand. When a discussion's lack of direction becomes evident, it is sometimes useful to stop and trace the shifts by which the conversation moved to where it is. Analyzing a recording of a casual conversation can make this shifting process clearer and can help to make students more aware of the difficulties inherent in focusing discussions on particular issues or problems. When a teacher or his students ask for clarification and expansion of ideas and statements they may foster depth and objectivity. The simple device of asking "What did you mean by that?" or "I wish you would say more about this" can encourage students to think and express themselves more clearly and in greater detail. Asking "How do you know that? What's your evidence?" or "Do you think that's true in every case?" can help to encourage a more critical, objective attitude. Of course, asking such questions involves listening to the speaker rather than concentrating on one's own next remark.

Communication problems are seldom solved in silence. They are solved, if at all, by communicating and observing the effect. In a nonthreatening and supportive classroom, students can try out and learn the consequences of various speaking voices, roles, and communication modes, and they can do so without paying the social price such experiments might exact in the outside world. The teacher's job here is to create a class climate in which communication is possible, to listen sensitively and be aware of speech difficulties, and, as Wilkinson says, to create "situations in which language is the natural outcome."

**TO ENCOURAGE SELF-EXPRESSION** Self-expression is the way a personality goes public and impresses itself upon others. As Walker Gibson says, quoting Aristotle, "the need to produce a particular impression of ourselves, 'to enjoy the credit of a certain character,' affects every moment of social behavior." Just as the teacher of composition strives to make his students aware of the range of options and possibilities in writing, so the teacher of oral language helps students to increase the range of verbal and nonverbal behavior

available to them in a variety of speech situations. In today's world, this is not simply a matter of determining one's single true self and learning to express it. As Douglas Barnes says in urban democracies the student must come to grips with a diversity of voices, opinions, and beliefs.

Each must learn to tolerate the many voices within himself, to recognize and express his own variousness to learn how to live amongst uncertainties and divided loyalties.<sup>8</sup>

In his speech and actions as in writing the student chooses to present himself to the world in a variety of stylistic manners, and however unconsciously these choices are made they do produce results. As Walker Gibson says "every choice he makes is significant in dramatizing a personality or voice, with a particular center of concern and a particular relation to the person he is addressing."<sup>9</sup> The teacher cannot make these choices for the student, no one can accept such responsibility for someone else's character. But teachers can help students to extend the range of choices available to them and to recognize the consequences of these choices.

Nonverbal expression may also provide a way to approach verbal communication. For example, a teacher exploring the ways we form initial impressions of others might ask students to relate and consider situations in which they made a bad impression on someone. As Walker Gibson says, in face-to-face situations, not wearing a necktie, blowing cigarette smoke, maintaining silence—these are all character-building acts "ways of dramatizing ourselves before others. He continues

We build our characters constantly in ways that are not strictly linguistic at all. Consider beards, boots, long hair, steel rimmed glasses—all eloquent symbols in our time for self portrayal.<sup>10</sup>

Despite traditional lip service to the goal, schools and teachers have been notoriously unsuccessful in promoting competent and confident self-expression, at least within the school itself. A veritable army of observers, including teachers themselves, have reported on the "deadening silence," "boredom and apathy," "alienation," "joylessness," and "fear" which pervade many classrooms. Such an

8 Douglas Barnes *Drama in the English Classroom* (Urbana: Ill. NCTE, 1968) p. 2

9 Tough *Sweet & Stuffy*, p. x

10 Composition as the Center for an Intellectual Life. In *The Hues of English* (Urbana: Ill. NCTE 1969) p. 79

atmosphere is certainly not conducive to the kind of learning or self-expression teachers hope to inspire

**TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE AND ITS EFFECTS** When students are engaged in a variety of oral language activities, the classroom becomes a laboratory in which situations, talk, and its consequences can become data for study. Language learning in these circumstances is not an abstract study of syntax, far removed from students' concerns but an inquiry into relevant human situations, depending much more on immediate experience and perhaps a tape recorder than on textbooks and memorized terminology. Nor is such study merely a diversion from the 'real' study of grammar and usage. For the most serious and important linguists of our age, as Neil Postman observes

language is always a social event a process that occurs in a human context organized for some human purpose to achieve particular effects. For them the most important question that can be asked by a linguist is: What does language cause to happen? Let us allow our students to investigate matters that can make a difference in their own language behavior.<sup>11</sup>

In many respects such a semantic-rhetorical study of language, stressing processes and consequences, is similar to the study of literature. Just as writers shape situations in evocative ways, all people express their reality through the inherent biases of language and all too often they name first and look later.

Ironically enough, then, a teacher trying to increase his students' confidence in their use of language must also strive to develop in them a tentative, speculative attitude toward symbols generally. The student of language should realize the need for caution both in his use of and response to words. Through drama, role playing and the give and take of discussion students may come to understand that how things are and how we say things are usually differ, and that we frequently respond to labels rather than to reality. This labeling process can be particularly troublesome in schools.

Once we judge someone or something we tend to stop thinking about them or it. Which means among other things that we behave in response to our judgments rather than to that which is

11 Linguistics and the Pursuit of Relevance *English Journal* 56 (Nov. 1967) 1163-64



being judged. This is one reason that judgments are commonly self fulfilling. If a boy for example is judged as being dumb and a nonreader early in his school career that judgment sets into motion a series of teacher behaviors that cause the judgment to become self fulfilling.<sup>12</sup>

Psychologist Haim Ginott suggests that whenever teachers impute motives or point to negative personal qualities they should begin the statement with "I think not you."<sup>13</sup> "I think you are telling a lie not You are a liar." Such a device emphasizes the semantic fact that meanings and labels both cloud and reflect people's perceptions of reality; they are ascribed to things rather than got from them.

Perhaps the single most important thing students can learn about language is that the give and take of open discussion is absolutely necessary if our democratic system is to survive. Even in a democracy which values free speech and dialectic processes pressures inhibiting inquiry and openness to opposing ideas exist. These pressures in part stem from the very normal desire for stability and certainty in times which offer little of either. But education for an uncertain and rapidly changing world must equip students to think critically, to listen to differing viewpoints and to question even those things which may seem to be beyond question. As Charles Weingartner says, such an education

occurs largely through having those to be educated confront questions about themselves and their tribe and its attitudes, beliefs, values, assumptions, and rituals that they probably would not confront if left to their own devices.<sup>14</sup>

Honest, open, thoughtful discussion in which even absolute truths may be doubted and in which all relevant viewpoints are given a full hearing is still man's best intermediary between error and reality. Perhaps such literary works as Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident* and films like *Twelve Angry Men* can help impress upon students the value of considered judgment and of dissenting voices. Perhaps too the demonstrated uncertainties of language can help to instill a respect for tentativeness and honest doubt. Unfortunately, in many schools the fear of error and controversy leads to

12. Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York: Delacorte, 1969), p. 199.

13. *Teacher and Child* (New York: Macmillan, 1977).

14. Charles Weingartner, "Semantics: What and Why," *English Journal* 58 (Nov. 1969), p. 1218.

prohibition of the serious discussion of issues which would be most likely to reduce them <sup>15</sup>

**MAKING THE CLASSROOM A LIVELIER AND MORE PROFIT-ABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** One of the most disquieting fears of beginning teachers, perhaps second only to the fear of chaos is the fear of a completely apathetic class which refuses to become interested or involved in school work. Two of the most frequently heard questions in methods classes and in faculty lounges are "How can I get them to ' ' and 'How can I get them interested in ' ' " Apathy and indifference are not the basic personality traits of young people yet motivating students to learn is a major problem for many teachers.

Calling students apathetic or unmotivated is, of course, another example of labeling. However apt the description, it does tend to shift attention and perhaps blame away from one major source of the problem—the conventional classroom. Unfortunately, Charles E. Silberman's well documented observation does not seem to be an overstatement of the case:

It is not possible to spend any prolonged period visiting public school classrooms without being appalled by the mutilation visible everywhere—mutilation of spontaneity, of joy in learning of pleasure in creating of sense of self. Because adults take the schools so much for granted, they fail to appreciate what grim joy less places most American schools are <sup>16</sup>

Such environments are not likely to promote positive attitudes toward school subjects or to encourage involvement, initiative, or critical thinking. As Silberman says:

schools discourage students from developing the capacity to learn by and for themselves for they are structured in such a way as to make students totally dependent upon the teachers <sup>17</sup>

In fact, if significant learning requires active, interested engagement, most students learn much more at social and athletic events than they do in their classrooms.

15 See for example Judith F. Krug's discussion of the censorship issue in *Growing Pains: Intellectual Freedom and the Child* *English Journal* 61 (Sept. 1972): 805-13.

16 Charles E. Silberman *Crisis in the Classroom* (New York: Random, 1970) p. 10.

17 *Ibid.* p. 135.

The deadly tedium of many classes is largely a result of time-honored assumptions that have become highly questionable in the modern world. Many teachers, parents, administrators, and students continue to equate teaching with telling and learning with listening. Such a view of teaching had some validity when teachers were often the only educated people in the community and when children's main source of information about the world beyond their own communities was the school. But today's young person lives in an information rich environment where the problem of getting the information has been subordinated to the problem of evaluating and thinking about it. Yet despite these changed circumstances and needs, students are still not learning how to ask questions, think critically, or make sense of data. Even in the discussions of literature which should provide endless opportunities for examining and questioning human concerns, perceptions, and behavior, students are often limited to answering questions which stress academic matters such as form, style, and literary history.

No single approach to subject matter will provide a panacea for student indifference, but in classrooms where students have frequent opportunities to talk and to engage in a variety of speech activities the general picture is brightened considerably. Reports of the Squire-Applebee observers indicate time and again that the British emphasis on oral work and drama seems to result in a more highly charged learning environment where students' sensitivity, enthusiasm, and involvement are notably increased.<sup>18</sup>

## ORAL LANGUAGE AS METHOD

Oral language activities can also provide important variety to the study of literature, language, and written composition.

**ORAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE** Perhaps the main reason for incorporating oral language activities into the study of literature is to bring literature into the social process of students' speech. In classrooms where only the teacher talks voluntarily, the student begins to associate literature with him rather than with his own life. In effect, he makes a choice, and as James Moffett points out

Ultimately a student, or adult for that matter, is more interested in his relation to other people than he is in a subject because psychic survival and fulfillment depend on what kind of relation one works out with the social world.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Squire Applebee *Teaching English in the U.K.* Chapters 8 and 9

<sup>19</sup> Drama *What Is Happening* (Urbana III NCTE 1967) p. 54

When students can incorporate literature into their talk and actions it becomes a social phenomenon. When student responses to literature are encouraged and legitimized in the classroom, their separation from literature is reduced.

Speech activities can help prepare a class for a literary selection. For example, before reading *Lord of the Flies*, students might discuss the special problems children would face if stranded and particularly the effect of fantasy on those problems. The class might act out the meeting of the shipwrecked children and their realization that there are no adult survivors. As James Moffett says, when students improvise key scenes and situations from a work before they read it, "When they do read it they already have an understanding of what is happening and of how differently the characters might have behaved."<sup>20</sup>

Teachers might introduce a thematic literature unit by asking students to make free associations of key words, to discuss the meanings they attach to these words, and to improvise situations the topic calls to mind. For example, a class dealing with the theme of man against himself might begin by considering the meanings of such words as conscience, inner struggle, self-satisfaction, guilt, and honesty, and recalling incidents in their own lives which involved inner conflict such as whether to go along with their friends against their parents' wishes, whether or not to do something they knew to be illegal or dishonest, whether or not to tell on someone or to hurt someone's feelings, or having to choose between two equally pleasant (or unpleasant) alternatives. Such incidents can easily be turned into improvisations involving two to five students, and they can be particularly helpful if they relate in obvious ways to situations dealt with in the literature to be read. The problem of personal loyalties, for example, is considered fully in much classroom literature. It is usually easy for students to think of situations in which this is a key concern. Improvisations not only involve students; they prepare them to read related selections with a greater degree of expectation and critical awareness.

Since the point of such improvisations and other dramatic activities is to encourage students' exploration of the possibilities of the situation as they see them, the teacher should avoid the tendency to over-direct the dramatization. Like the teacher looking for a right answer, the teacher who wants students to improvise the situation as he sees it may inadvertently negate the benefits of the activity. James Hoetker cautions,

the teacher who too often imposes his authority, or who conceives of drama as a kind of inductive method for arriving at preordained

correct answers will certainly vitiate the developmental values of drama and possibly its educational values as well<sup>21</sup>

As an introduction to Shakespearean drama students might be given a simplified synopsis of the play to be studied and asked to dramatize the actual text of a scene of their choice. In working through that scene they can confront Shakespearean language and the difficulties of visualizing a script without having to cope with the entire play. Many teachers have observed that when students try to develop a scene themselves they develop a greater appreciation for the artist's handling of the material.

During the reading of novels and drama oral activities can help bring situations to life and lead students to a greater sense of involvement in the work. Students can be asked to select and act out scenes they think would make the most exciting television material. They can role play different characters and retell episodes from their characters' points of view. In a novel with sections containing considerable dialogue such as the mock trial in *A Separate Peace* students can go through a scene using that dialogue and blocking out the movement as actors might in a first practice of a play. In a play where important incidents happen off stage students can be asked to consider how they could have been presented. What would be said? Which characters would be present? What would happen? They then can improvise the scene. When a novel or short story is being read by the whole class together the teacher can stop at various points and have students invent an ending for the episode or story. Especially for students who have reading problems activities which transform the written word into speech and action can make the selection more accessible and may increase their sense of involvement with it.

Oral interpretations and choral readings of poetry not only help to keep up interest they also stimulate analysis and develop understanding of the work to be interpreted. For example, after listening to Simon and Garfunkel's musical interpretation of *Richard Cory* students might work in groups to select poems and prepare tape recorded dramatizations of them. In deciding how lines are to be read what tone and quality of voice are appropriate and what sound effects and background music could be introduced the students will necessarily engage in a close reading and thorough analysis of the poem.

After students have read a selection oral work can include dramatizing or improvising key scenes, role playing, considering real life analogues for situations or characters, or developing student led dis-

21. *Dramatics and the Teaching of Literature* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE/ERIC, 1969)

cussions of the work. Although study of a selection should not be dragged out by such activities to the point where students lose interest, they do offer alternatives to traditional recitation and a better way to help students think about the literature read in class.

**ORAL LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE STUDY** When student talk is encouraged in the classroom, an alert teacher will find many opportunities to use classroom situations as the basis for language learning. He will not constantly interrupt activities but, when appropriate, will use students' language as an example and as an occasion to point out that something of linguistic interest is happening.

For example, name calling and stereotyping can frequently be observed. Seizing on an example, teachers may inquire into the phenomenon generally. The point is calling attention to this behavior and to similar behavior such as bragging, flattery, or cursing is not to attack the student who uses it but to generate student inquiry into language and its effects. Although childish name calling and the use of epithets may be reduced by schooling, labeling and judging are inherent and essential language processes. The objective is not to eliminate them but to be aware of the problems they create and through such awareness to diminish their ill effects.

The most effective language learning grows out of actual situations. A discussion which begins by bringing in students' own experiences is likely to be relevant, interesting, and understandable since students can see what the teacher is getting at from the outset. Although such discussions take longer than a lecture, they are also more likely to generate involvement and significant learning. Most of the following examples of teachers' questions begin by inviting students to relate particular instances from their own experience which can be used as the basis for subsequent inquiry. They also suggest a number of elements in students' speech behavior of which teachers should be aware.

1. What are you most apt to notice when you meet someone for the first time? On what basis do you form first impressions?
2. What kind of talk usually goes on at parties where people don't know each other very well? What is the function of "small talk"?
3. Think of an instance where you made a bad (or good) impression on someone. What happened?
4. Can you think of a case where nonverbal language played a bigger role in creating an impression than what the person actually said?
5. Do you know people who use clothes or posture or facial expression to create an impression or play a role? Have you ever tried to do this? What happened?
6. Think of an instance where your first impression of someone

- proved to be wrong. What happened to change it? What caused the impression in the first place?
- 7 What is a rumor? Think of a rumor or some gossip you have heard recently. What happened to it as it spread? Does everyone gossip? What are its effects?
  - 8 Consider the things you most enjoy doing. How many of them depend upon language? Is there any social activity that doesn't involve language?
  - 9 What if there was no such thing as language? What things couldn't exist that exist now?
  - 10 Consider a situation in which you found language extremely difficult (breaking up with a boy or girl friend, expressing condolences, or telling your parents about an accident with the car).
  - 11 Consider an incident in which something you heard changed the way you felt or acted toward someone.
  - 12 State something you think most people your age (or in this class) would believe in and agree with.
  - 13 State something you think most adults would agree with but that you and most people your age don't.
  - 14 How do you react to someone who speaks a different dialect? What assumptions do you make about a person who talks the way a hillbilly or a hippy talks?
  - 15 Have you ever been in a situation where dirty words created some problem? What makes words dirty? Why do people use those words?
  - 16 What verbal or nonverbal symbols affect you in particular ways but don't seem to affect others that way?
  - 17 Can you think of a situation in which you acted impetuously or unthinkingly because of something you heard or overheard? What words call forth unthinking responses from people?
  - 18 Are there things someone could say to you that would make you angry enough to start a fight?
  - 19 What are some song lyrics or television catch phrases you hear used in common speech?
  - 20 Think of a situation which led you to distrust someone. How do people gain or lose your trust?
  - 21 Which would you be more likely to believe: a radio disc jockey, a television news commentator, the President, or a teacher? Why do (or don't) you trust them?
  - 22 Think of a situation in which you have been bored. Was everyone else in that situation bored? How do you account for boredom? What is it?

**ORAL LANGUAGE AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION** The obvious relationship of speech to writing suggests a number of ways that students' oral expression can be used to improve their written expres-

sion As Moffett points out, "what becomes available for someone to put on paper when he is writing has already been greatly determined by prior verbal experience"<sup>22</sup>

In a direct sense, this suggests that discussion as a prewriting activity is helpful to generate ideas, phrases, and details students might wish to use in their papers During such discussions, ideas or images might be listed on the chalk board or jotted down by the students for later reference Writing assignments might also grow out of discussions or improvisations if they reveal issues or topics that seem to interest the students and about which they have something to say

Student talk also plays a crucial role in shaping the language students use in their writing As Moffett says, "the most important and successful way we learn linguistic forms is by internalizing the whole give and take of conversations" Classroom discussion in which 'questioning, collaborating, qualifying, and calling for qualification, are habitual give-and-take operations'<sup>23</sup> can improve students' speech and develop their ability to define and to relate ideas an ability apparently missing in much student writing

Monologue appears as a step in the natural progression from conversation to writing Again, as Moffett says, when a speaker takes over a conversation and begins to hold forth on some topic

he has started to create a solo discourse that while intended to communicate to others is less collaborative, less prompted and less corrected by feedback than dialogue He bears more of the responsibility for effective communication The cues for his next line are not what his interlocutor said but what he himself just said<sup>24</sup>

The teacher must encourage such a step, setting up situations in which students have the opportunity to hold forth on topics, perhaps using a tape recorder to save the flow of words for possible transcription

Following are several exercises that emphasize that it is as necessary to supply details for a reader as it is for a listener Each could be done orally, then redone as a writing exercise

- 1 The student thinks of an action or object and makes a general statement about it, without revealing what it is Other students then can try to identify the object by asking questions which re-

22 *Drama What Is Happening* p 10

23 *Ibid* , pp 18 and 19

24 *Ibid* p 22



quire responses giving additional details. When they have identified the object, the original student makes a statement including the information his questioners have obtained.

- 2 Students, given very general sentences are asked to provide additional information, comparisons or details to make the sentences more specific and more interesting.
- 3 Students provide concrete details which might be used to describe a particular action they have observed, such as lighting a match, dropping a pen, picking up a heavy box, slipping on ice, or running across a room.

Writing which is addressed to and read by other students reflects more closely the student's accustomed speech patterns than does writing addressed to the teacher alone. By providing opportunities for the former, the teacher can encourage more carry over from speech. Similarly, discussion of student writing can be used to provide conversation-type feedback. If anonymity can be assured, the teacher might read a paper to the class or supply dittoed copies and ask for readers' impressions. What kind of voice do you hear here? How does the writer strike you? What kind of person does the writer seem to be?<sup>25</sup> Such discussion can often provide more valuable information to the writer than can comments from his teacher.

Robert Zoellner's controversial "talk-write" theory of teaching writing is based on behavioral learning theory and involves extensive use of oral language in the teaching process.<sup>26</sup> Most writing courses and textbooks emphasize what Zoellner calls a think-write view of composition. They assume that poor writing is a result of poor thinking, and that once a student has thought out what he wants to say, good writing will follow fairly easily, with perhaps some minor adjustments in the final product. Thus, teachers and texts stress the development of ideas, logical thinking, and editing, but they generally ignore the writing process. Zoellner contends that although thinking and revising are obviously important, poor writing frequently reflects not a failure in thinking but a failure in the act of writing itself. As Zoellner points out, many students are able to say quickly and well what they are unable to write. According to him, teachers can do more to improve composition by concentrating on the act of writing, using the student's present verbal repertory (both oral and written), permit-

25 Such questions sometimes bring unexpected insights. The author recalls one such experience when a particularly good short story by a student reminded another student of the exact same story in a recent issue of *Boys' Life*.

26 Zoellner's theory is thoroughly explained in "A Behavioral Approach to Writing," *College English* 30 (Jan. 1969): 267-320. The classroom applications of his theory are most clearly described in sections VIII and IX (pp. 296-302).

ting many opportunities for writing, and providing immediate reinforcement when the student improves

Zoellner's talk-write approach begins with a student's speech, which is usually more fluent and competent than his writing. In "vocal-to scribal dialogues" the teacher or another student encourages the "writer" to express himself orally about a composition topic, to verbalize as frequently and fluently as possible. When the writer expresses himself well, the listener has the speaker write the statement down immediately. The dialogue then continues using this first piece of writing as the base, with the teacher-listener encouraging the writer to say more about the topic and what he has already written. When the speaker again says something which the listener wants to encourage, he is again told to write it down immediately. Elaboration on and improvement of the writing is carried on through such dialogues. In behavioral terms, the student emits behavior from his own repertory at a high frequency and only those behaviors are reinforced which are desirable and tend toward the objective of good writing.

In these dialogues, then, the listener provides as much opportunity as possible for good writing to occur and be reinforced, keeping the flow of speech going through questioning, attentive listening, and occasional verbal encouragement. Zoellner cautions against using such phrases as "think about it" or "reconsider" in these dialogues.

Tell a student to think and there will be an immediate drop in the density and variety of external behavior. His body tenses up, he becomes motionless, his face takes on a wooden expression, and his vocalization drops to zero for the simple reason that everything in his cultural and school experience has told him that thinking is one thing and talking quite another.<sup>2</sup>

As talk continues and writing begins to accumulate, the listener can ask the writer to concentrate on what he has already done, spinning out implications, developing parts of a statement or improving the wording.

A teacher with a class of twenty or thirty students obviously cannot conduct all of these talk-write dialogues himself, and Zoellner advocates pairing or grouping students as speaker-writers and listener-teachers. The teacher then can move about the room making suggestions, commenting and prompting those who need it. In such a workshop situation, instruction is based initially on sentence improvement or other specific problems which also highlight particular writing behavior. For example, a teacher might give a class some uninspired sentences written by the previous year's group and ask

them to make the words sound more like real speech. Or the teacher could ask the class to write a few sentences or a short paragraph on a particular topic or to describe some familiar scene around school such as the cafeteria or the halls after the last class period.

Talk-write teaching assumes that students can generally talk better than they can write and that speaking skill can help to improve writing skill. It further assumes that the interplay of speaking and writing will help to improve both: reshaping writing by giving it a voice consistent with the author's speaking voice and improving oral language by giving speech some of the literate characteristics which distinguish the trained speaker from the mere talker."

### INITIATING ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

For most American English teachers and students, extensive oral work in the classroom is not an accepted familiar practice. Whereas the British may be accustomed to spending up to thirty percent of their class time in speech and dramatic activities, most American secondary school students would find it strange to be asked to do more than answer the teacher's questions, read aloud now and then, or make an occasional presentation. Extensive oral work demands more active cooperative participation than students are used to, an increase in student interaction and movement, and some decrease in direct teacher control. Learning necessarily becomes a more social activity, no longer occurring solely in the silent isolation of seat work or listening.

An English teacher who wants to use oral activities extensively then must first confront a range of habits and attitudes which inhibit cooperation and communication. Quiet students may resist such activities because they feel secure in the privacy and isolation of silent work. Some good students may object because they don't consider oral work to be real English. Teachers will probably have the greatest difficulty, however, with so-called apathetic students.

Most secondary school students have long since learned that teachers who say "I expect you to participate" want you to say what you think, often really do not mean it. Furthermore, for a substantial number of adolescents, voluntary participation in class work is socially unwise. Under threat of criticism from the teacher and the much more potent threat of ridicule from his peers, the student is more likely to be concerned with self-defense than with self-expression, and two important elements of his defense are silence and noninvolvement. Also, despite the obvious relationship of language

to things which honestly concern students, language as a school subject has often been far removed from their interests. Conditioned to be passive observers, afraid of failure or ridicule, and indifferent toward the subject matter, many students seem to resist even the most sincere attempts to involve them in active school learning. The challenge with such students is to encourage conversation and other activities without encouraging chaos. For students accustomed to close supervision and firm controls, the invitation to talk is often interpreted as an invitation to horseplay. Obviously, nothing much will be accomplished in a chaotic classroom or one in which the threat of peer-group ridicule is ever-present. Perhaps more than in any other school work, cooperation and supportive informality are necessary for productive oral language activities. To some extent, this kind of class climate is a result of the teacher's self-confidence, personality, and the way he interacts with students. But it also takes time and concentrated effort to teach students to work together in groups and to feel comfortable with each other. (For additional comments on establishing classroom climate, see Chapter 3, pp. 42-46.)

Perhaps the greatest asset a teacher can have in encouraging students to talk is his own ability to listen. Beginning teachers in particular, perhaps because of their nervousness, often seem more concerned with formulating their questions than listening to student answers. A common failing of student teachers leading their first discussions is to charge through a series of well-conceived, stimulating questions in record time, leaving a trail of monosyllabic responses, potentially useful student comments, and increasing confusion in their wake. Good questions should and can stimulate considered responses, but the teacher must allow some time for thought to take shape and surface and time for others to assimilate the responses he gets before charging off to the next question.

A more serious and pervasive listening problem, even for experienced teachers, is identified by Carl Rogers as "our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the other person, or the other group."<sup>29</sup> By evaluating statements only from our own point of view, we often fail to hear what the other person is saying or to appreciate that his words will reflect his own perspective, not ours. Real communication is possible, Rogers says, when we listen empathically, when we can see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference.<sup>30</sup> As an exercise to

29 "Dealing with Breakdowns in Communication—Interpersonal and Inter-group. On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1961) p. 330

30 *Ibid.*, p. 332

demonstrate the difficulty of such listening Rogers suggests conducting a discussion using the simple rule that each speaker can say what he wants only after he has first restated the previous speaker's ideas and feelings to that speaker's satisfaction. Although such a technique tends to stop the usual flow of talk we call discussion (and probably should not be tried with a class of nontalkers), it can still be a useful device for both teachers and students.

The teacher who consistently listens only for mistakes, for the correct answer, or for talk appropriate to the topic is engaging in the most restrictive kind of evaluative listening. It is not surprising that students with such a teacher become passive, reticent, and even fearful, and that class discussions become difficult. Unless students believe that their ideas and opinions will be heard and respected, they are unlikely to say much that matters to them, and there is little point in criticizing how a student says something he didn't want to say in the first place.

Teachers who want students to engage in more honest spontaneous discussion and to become actively involved in class talk should take pains to avoid the kind of highly judgmental listening and responding which inhibits conversation and student-teacher relationships. In literary discussions, for example, the teacher can emphasize questions calling for individual judgment or divergent thinking and then listen carefully and respectfully to student responses. If a teacher asked Cleanth Brooks or Northrop Frye what he thought of a selection, line, or character, his attention would be riveted on the response as he tried to understand what the critic was telling him. By attending as closely to his students, the teacher is more likely to hear what is being said and to develop better, more honest discussion. He is also in a much better position to use, build on, and encourage students' comments when making his own remarks and when framing subsequent questions.

Each of the following specific suggestions should be useful to the teacher beginning work with students who have had little previous experience with oral language activities.

Know the purpose of oral activities. The teacher who is convinced of their value and has developed a sound rationale for their use will not fear hostile questions of colleagues, parents, or students. More important, in acting from conviction he will perform better and create a positive image, thereby insuring that many questions never arise in the first place.

Get a classroom with movable furniture and arrange it to suit the activities. The physical arrangement of traditional classrooms is appropriate for lectures, recitations, and individual silent work, it discourages student talk and interaction. In a class of fifteen to twenty, it is usually possible to seat all students in a circle or horse-

shoe for class discussion. In larger classes, the size of the group probably precludes profitable discussions of any sort, even if suitable seating were possible. Much oral work requires that students be able to sit face-to-face in small clusters. For dramatic work, sufficient space can usually be made by pushing desks and chairs out of the way.

Especially at the outset, select topics and situations to which students can relate directly and easily. When students are asked to discuss and express opinions on subjects they know and care little about, the results are apt to be glib or nonexistent. Like most adults, students are more likely to express themselves voluntarily and with confidence when they are talking about things that matter to them. In a Ford Foundation study, three major student concerns are identified as typical of disadvantaged pupils and probably of others as well: concern with self-image, concern about the way one fits into the scheme of things, and concern about power or control over one's life and world.<sup>31</sup> A teacher confronting a class with negative attitudes toward English would be wiser to begin with situations from life rather than from literature. Many students are more at home talking about or improvising on family situations, social or political issues, or events in school rather than events they must first read about. As Dorothy Heathcote says of improvisations,

The core of entry to the situation must be tailored to fit the experiences and attitudes the class will generally hold. The teacher's task [is] to ease the way into the situation for the class. This means a sensitive examination of and willingness to understand what will be the kicks for the class.<sup>32</sup>

Encourage students to question and inquire. As a student progresses through school he asks fewer and fewer questions. Even if he is interested in the subject, he may hesitate to ask a question, believing that if it is really important the teacher will answer it at the proper time anyway.

The inquiry method of teaching encourages students to formulate their own questions and look for answers. It not only increases classroom speech but helps the teacher to identify those topics and problems most interesting to his students. He may encourage questions directly by asking students for instance to list five complaints

31 Gerald Weinstein and Mario D. Fantini, eds. *Toward Humanistic Education: A Curriculum of Affect* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 39-40.

32 Dorothy Heathcote. *Improvisation: Drama in Education*. *English in Education* vol. 1, no. 3 (London: NATE Autumn 1967), pp. 28-29. (Available from NCTE.)

they have about school and then phrase them as questions or indirectly through games such as twenty questions or contests to see for instance which group can make up the most questions about a short film or a poem in a ten minute period. The teacher may begin a unit by asking students to formulate as many questions as they can about the topic or by presenting a problem which will generate questions (A unit on the language of advertising might begin with the problem of how best to sell a hypothetical product). To illustrate another technique Frank Miceli has written a detailed description of a lively class in which the teacher encouraged serious student questions by pretending that his attache case contained a small computer which could answer any question put to it.<sup>33</sup>

Shift some responsibility to the students. Dorothy Heathcote begins whole class improvisations by asking students to make a series of choices: whether to place a scene in the past or now, in town or country, outside or inside, and whether to portray the characters as adults or children. Teachers who ask students to plan and lead class discussions on particular issues or literary selections often find that the resulting discussions are both profitable and lively, and that other students become more involved in helping out the student leader. And as teachers know, teaching something to others helps a person understand it better himself.

Provide opportunities for group work. As Andrew Wilkinson points out:

The basic conversational situation, the basic discussion situation is one in which two or three or half a dozen are sitting around and ideas get discussed and pushed around. So the basic situation for development of oracy for oral production is the group situation.<sup>34</sup>

For initial work in groups, it is often useful to provide a time limit for a particular task, insuring that students must cooperate and work productively. For instance, a teacher might require a group to spend ten minutes formulating twenty questions on a poem they have just read, or to spend fifteen minutes writing and preparing to read to the class a three person dialogue on a particular situation. Or the teacher might set up informal intergroup competitions, asking each group to develop a set of questions about a brief reading selection that may stump an opposing group. Students unwilling to speak before a large class may gain some experience and self confidence by working in such groups.

33. Miceli's article "Education and Reality" is printed in Postman and Weinberger's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, pp. 171-80.

34. The Concept of Oracy, *English Journal* 59 (Jan. 1970) 75.

Set up some type situations requiring talk and cooperation. For example, the teacher might ask students to speak for one minute on some general topic such as winter, night, old people, or flowers. Groups could then be formed and given a few minutes to discuss what one might say about the topic before an individual speaker is picked from each group. Alternatively, students can devise cryptic definitions or descriptions of an unnamed object and have other students use a twenty-questions approach to determine what the object is.

**Be tolerant of silences.** As any teacher knows who has tried to keep a study hall quiet, silence is itself a goad to talk. In any group situation, someone will eventually speak up. The teacher who can resist the natural temptation to fill the gap with his own voice may find more of his students speaking up.

**Be prepared to start small.** Especially when students resist involvement and expect the teacher to direct them in conventional class activities, the teacher may have to work up to oral activities gradually. He might, for instance, begin with a series of brief, ten minute discussions on current topics, or with games such as those cited above. When such activities are placed in the middle of the class period, before and after more traditional and structured work, they are usually viewed as a welcome break in the routine, and students do not take them as a signal that serious class work has ended for the day.

**Use modified role playing early.** Teachers who have not done any dramatic work themselves are sometimes leery of attempting it in their classes, but it is often easier to initiate improvisation and role playing than to generate a good discussion. Any talk of human events or people is never far from the questions, "What would you have said?" "What do you suppose he said then?" or "How would you have said it?" And such questions are only one step removed from "Go ahead, show me." It is not unusual to find that students who are quite poor in other language skills have a genuine flair for improvisation. When students improvise a situation to which they can easily relate, other students will usually be attentive and sympathetic.

**Be willing to participate.** A teacher can overcome his own fears and increase students' self-confidence if he also takes part in some activities. For example, he might take a small assigned part in a scene or play the unexpected intruder that influences a scene the students are doing. If he has not had acting experience, such participation may take considerable courage at first, but even if he does poorly, his showing of good sportsmanship will probably more than compensate for his loss of dignity. In discussions too, a teacher should at times relinquish his role as expert director, and judge and participate as a learner. It is not unusual to find students who know more about a subject than the teacher does. Teachers playing the role of critical ob-



server impose a distance between themselves and students which can dampen class discussion and oral activities generally

## VARIETIES OF ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Oral language activities can include the whole range of ways that students communicate and express themselves orally in the classroom. The teacher who knows what classroom activities are possible and is sensitive to speech situations finds abundant opportunity for productive oral work. The beginning teacher, however, may find it useful to list specific methods and activities which will initiate oral work and create situations "in which language is the natural outcome." Such a list could be organized in several ways. James Moffett, for instance, categorizes various methods under the headings dramatic improvisation, discussion, performing scripts, monologuing, recording, writing script and dialogues, and reading.<sup>22</sup> Another grouping could be exercises and games, projects and assignments, class discussions, oral interpretation, dramatic activities, and school speech activities.

The teacher who is new to the classroom or who feels most secure dealing with conventional subject matter will find it important to relate speech activities and subject matter in fairly obvious ways so that the activities become interesting diversions or improve class climate and are not mere fun and games. Virtually all of the activities listed can be related to language study, literature or composition and it may be best to stress these relationships at least until the teacher sees and believes their importance to the broader purposes of oral work cited earlier. As the teacher becomes more relaxed and self-confident in the classroom, as sensitive to students' speech as he is to his own, as he becomes more aware of the learning potential in oral activities, he will see how they produce material for discussion and comment and how student involvement yields linguistic growth and understanding.

**EXERCISES AND GAMES** Exercises such as the following may be used to ease students into oral work or as activities related to a teaching unit. At the beginning of a course they are also useful as a way of helping students to get acquainted and interact.

1. Students are asked to pair up, sit back to back, and to converse with each other without turning around. Then they are asked to

face each other and try to communicate silently, using only their faces and not mouthing words. Following this, they may try to communicate using only their hands. At the end of this sequence, students are told to close their eyes and to sit quietly for a few moments before discussing their reactions to the exercise. The back-to-back technique points out particularly effectively the importance of nonverbal cues in conversation.<sup>36</sup>

2. Pairs of students are organized into groups of four or five pairs. One of each pair becomes part of an "inner circle"; the other sits outside the circle where he can observe his partner. Those in the inner circle are given a topic to discuss among themselves for five or ten minutes. While the inner circle talks, the observers silently watch the proceedings, paying particular attention to their partners. At the end of the time, the observers shift to the inner circle and discuss their observations of the preceding discussion. As a variation of this, students can be asked to pair up again after the initial discussion. Then the observer tells his partner what he observed about him in the group: whether he spoke up; whether he listened and responded to others; whether he was particularly ill at ease; whether he tried to dominate the group.
3. Students may also be asked to complete anonymously sentence fragments such as:

I am happiest when ...  
 If only I could ...  
 Most people don't like ...  
 I get really angry when ...  
 Ten years from now, I expect to be ...

If he can be sure that anonymity is maintained, the teacher can then collect the responses and read some aloud for students to discuss.

4. As a stimulus to student questions, they can play the "alibi game" described in the Squire-Applebee study<sup>37</sup>

Two pupils are asked to leave the room for five minutes and to plan a joint alibi for a specific time and crime. Each then returns to

36 This exercise and the following one are adapted from George Isaac Brown's *Human Teaching for Human Learning* (New York: Viking, 1971). Brown also suggests a number of ways that such sensitivity training exercises can be directly related to the study of particular novels and plays. For additional exercises and suggestions, see Harold C. Lyon, Jr., *Learning to Feel—Feeling to Learn* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1971); Thomas D. Klein, "Personal Growth in the Classroom," *Dartmouth, Dixon, and Humanistic Psychology*, *English Journal* 59 (Feb. 1970): 235–43; and Jean S. Schleifer, "Fancy's House," *English Journal* 61 (Sept. 1972): 892–99.

the room and is questioned separately by the rest of the class who try to catch discrepancies in the two stories."

- 5 A teacher can also write several phrases on the board such as "Who told you that? I didn't do it" or "What did her mother say?" He then asks students to repeat the phrases in different ways so they convey different meanings and asks others to make comments which could have elicited the sentence as it was said. This activity can easily lead into improvisation or precede the reading of a play.
- 6 Another avenue to improvisation is formed by having students read and then improvise additions to brief dramatic dialogues such as
  - 1 Boy! And I thought she was my friend!
  - 2 She probably didn't mean it.
  - 1 Well then why did she say it?
  - 2 Are you sure she really said it?
  - 1
  - 2
- 7 A student is asked to give an impromptu talk on a given topic for thirty seconds or one minute. This activity can be enlivened by providing each student with some object to sell to the class: a golf tee, banana, hairpin, or coin.
- 8 The teacher can write a simple cake recipe on the board and have students read it in different ways: as a love note, a dear John letter, a police report, a sports announcement, or a radio commercial. This same thing can be done with short dramatic excerpts such as Macbeth's "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" speech.
- 9 Students can be asked to ham up the telling of a familiar children's story such as *The Three Bears*, *Cinderella*, or *Red Riding Hood*. These stories can also provide the basis for scene improvisations or written dialogue. As a variation of this exercise the teacher can have students tell brief stories entirely in gibberish.
- 10 A teacher may want students to develop group or class stories. He begins by establishing an order of participation and then gives a starter sentence such as "George thought that he would have lots of time to work on his motorcycle but as he entered the garage he was surprised to see that..." He then calls on the first student to continue the story and continues through the group or class. This exercise requires students to listen and adjust their contributions to what previous speakers have said. If the session is taped

- students can listen to the final product and see where particular contributors got off the track established by earlier speakers. This activity can also include improvisation of parts of the story
- 11 Another effective technique is to set up games of whispering down the alley. Here students are organized into groups of five or six, and one from each group is told a brief story. He then returns to his group and whispers the story to another person, who in turn whispers it to the next, and so on through the group. At the conclusion, the last person in each group tells the story to the class, and the final versions of the various groups are compared to the original
  - 12 Students are asked to explain a common term to a person who hasn't heard it before, such as a foreign student or a young child. The teacher can enter in, questioning the student to show where he is failing to communicate. Attempts to explain more complex terms such as democracy, rights, success, or happiness can become a basis for class discussion and inquiry

**PROJECTS AND ASSIGNMENTS** The teacher may also want to make suggestions for individual or group assignments. Although activities such as the following can be used to stimulate class discussion and further projects, emphasis should not be on the end product, but on the process of developing it

- 13 The teacher asks students to create and tape record a fifteen minute segment of a radio disc jockey program. The segment should include no more than three records, and the rest of the time should be given to patter and commercials. Students could also be asked to do the same thing live in class in order to increase their fluency and ability to think on their feet. Visits to local stations or by disc jockeys might extend the activity
- 14 The teacher might ask students to create a tape-recorded essay on some theme or topic of their own choosing. They should be encouraged to use the recorder's potential by mixing different sounds to create a particular impression: segments of an interview, excerpts from readings, lines from poetry, music, or appropriate sounds. Effective editing of such essays will require at least two tape recorders and possibly a record player as well<sup>38</sup>
- 15 Ask students to prepare an oral report comparing the speech patterns of their age group in and outside of school, in class and in

38 For an excellent guide in making tape essays and in other creative uses of tape recorders see Herb Karl's *Response Through Non Print Media: Some Possibilities* in William Evans ed. *The Creative Teacher* (New York: Banlam 1971) pp 28-38

the cafeteria, at parties and at a local teen hangout. They might also compare recorded conversations of teen-agers and adults or of particular groups such as athletes, church members or car enthusiasts.

- 16 Ask students to prepare for and conduct a tape recorded interview with someone. For instance, they might attempt to get a senior citizen's views on young people today, or a policeman's candid views on teen-age crime.

**CLASS DISCUSSIONS** Activities such as the following may make classroom discussion more like the give and-take of normal conversation and may provide opportunities to develop such qualities as reciprocity, relevance, depth, and objectivity. Since most classes are too large for productive discussion, it is often necessary to organize the class into groups for such activities.

17. The teacher divides his students into groups and gives them ten minutes to develop questions that they and their friends are really interested in for general class (or group) discussion. The following day, the group should lead and carry out the discussion. At its conclusion, the value of the activity can be discussed. The teacher might provide materials for this activity by selecting poetry, short stories and films or other materials which deal with the questions that most concern students.
- 18 A variety of materials and experiences can be used to stimulate spontaneous discussions: newspaper articles, unfamiliar objects, tapes of strange sounds, short films, music, art work, photographs, bits of student conversation, school gossip, and literature. An interesting stimulus can give natural direction to a discussion by providing a common experience to which all can refer. To the extent that the stimulus gives focus and direction, the teacher's role can be reduced.
- 19 Students can be asked to discuss difficult speech situations such as talking to someone who has just had a death in the family, talking to someone who has overheard an unkind remark you made about him, telling a good friend about a habit he has which annoys you, breaking bad news to someone, talking to a policeman who has stopped you for speeding, striking up a conversation with a stranger, or being interviewed for a job. Especially with older students, this last situation can provide an excellent way to introduce role playing and improvisation.
- 20 After playing Simon and Garfunkel's song 'The Sounds of Silence,' and perhaps reading some poems on the subject of alienation, ask students to consider whether alienation is really a problem for young people at this time.

- 21 Problem situations requiring students to make choices are often effective stimuli for discussion if the problems seem interesting or important. For example, a teacher might pose the following situations

If I knew my brother (or a close friend) was on hard drugs, I should  
 (a) ignore the situation, (b) talk to him about it and try to persuade him to get help (c) tell my parents or another responsible adult  
 Invent an animal, society, or plant and describe its characteristics  
 Make five statements which would be true of an ideal society, school teacher, or parent

- 22 Panel discussions and debates are two specialized forms of discussion students may enjoy engaging in. However, teachers should be careful to assign students inexperienced in classroom oral work topics which genuinely interest them. In panel discussions and debates, the teacher should stress the need to question, challenge, ask for clarification, and request supporting arguments.
- 23 A visitor or guest speaker can also spark discussion in the classroom, especially if students are encouraged to formulate in advance questions they want to ask him. If desired, these questions may be submitted to the guest before his talk.

**ORAL INTERPRETATION** Interpretations can include a host of activities, from recounting an incident, to telling stories, to reading aloud expressively, or doing some forms of role-playing. Unfortunately, however, students who are sometimes asked to read poems, stories, or plays aloud are seldom shown how to improve their delivery and expression. Exercises such as five, six, and eight above can demonstrate the importance of expression to understanding.

When planning oral interpretations of written material, the teacher must be particularly aware of his students' reading abilities and problems. Oral interpretation can help to improve reading skills, and hearing a selection read aloud can help the poor reader who is following along in his text, but there is little value in making a student stumble uncomprehendingly through material he cannot read. All students should be given the opportunity to develop their oral reading skill, but materials for such activities should not be beyond their reading abilities.

- 24 Students can be given the opportunity to read or tell stories to younger children. Preparation for story-telling is an excellent way for students to learn myths, folk tales, and ballads.
- 25 Students can recount a television drama, movie plot, or an actual incident they have witnessed. Such activity involves analysis and synthesis as well as oral delivery skills.

- 26 Readers' theatre, the use of voices to create a literary experience for an audience, is a more formal type of oral interpretation that relates particularly well to the study of short stories. Although a useful activity, since, in preparing a script for oral reading, students must consider such things as point of view, theme, characterization, and conflict, readers' theatre demands much more of students than informal activities do, and it stresses performance for an audience more than may be desirable. It is probably most useful as a whole-class project in which everyone can contribute to the selection, scripting, or performing. In it, students select a story, decide which parts to include and how to arrange them, and determine how the various parts are to be interpreted orally in order to convey the story most effectively to the audience. Although music, particular seating arrangements, lighting and visual effects may figure in the production, the readers' voices are the key element.
- 27 Groups of students can prepare and tape record interpretations of a poem or a dramatic dialogue from a novel or play and can supply appropriate background music and sound effects.
- 28 Students can transform a story into a radio play and then evaluate what was gained or lost in the transformation. In preparing to do a radio play, they may find it useful to listen to some recordings of old radio shows such as "Sorry, Wrong Number" or the Orson Welles' version of "War of the Worlds" which many schools have available on records.

**DRAMATIC ACTIVITIES** The key distinction between dramatics and other oral language activities is that drama involves more physical movement and may include such purely physical forms as dance or pantomime. Dramatic activity gets literature off the page and students out of their seats; it requires participation on a physical level. Since gestures and other physical movements are so closely related to verbal expression, the line between oral interpretation and drama is not always clear. In both cases, however, the classroom object is not public performance, but the involvement of the participants in a learning experience.

By stressing action, involvement, and concentration on the task or problem rather than staging, the teacher can reduce somewhat the self-consciousness and fear which may accompany role playing, improvisation, or acting from scripts. However, for many students it is a big step from oral interpretation done sitting down to dramatic activity involving movement, and the teacher must be prepared to work up to such activities slowly.

- 29 To begin, during the reading of a play or novel, the teacher may

- ask students to get out of their seats and set up a scene as they visualize it happening. Even if they do little more than set up a silent tableau, by deciding how and where characters are standing, who is speaking to whom, what the speaker is doing, how characters enter or leave the scene, and where important objects are located, the students engage in interpretation, some quasidramatic movement, and probably in some oral activity as well.
- 30 John Hodgson and Ernest Richards contend that in order for dramatic movement, and probably in some oral activity as well, concentrate on the situation and characters and become less self-conscious about "performing." They suggest that concentration can be developed by exercises such as viewing a picture or scene for a brief time and then building an improvisation using as many details from the scene as the students can remember. Other concentration exercises include focusing on particular senses, attempting to whistle a tune while others are whistling different tunes, or reading a newspaper aloud while others try to interrupt.<sup>39</sup>
- 31 Teachers can build up gradually to dramatic improvisation by asking students to do steps such as the following:
- a asking all students to make the same simple individual movements such as shaving, writing or throwing at the same time,
  - b asking students to perform simple individual actions involving movement through space such as going through a dark cave, inching along a narrow ledge, walking barefoot across sharp pebbles, or walking the way a small child or old woman does,
  - c asking them to pantomime activities involving the cooperation of two or more people such as sawing a tree, lifting a casket, pushing a car, having a tug-of-war, or creating the moving and interacting parts of a large machine,
  - d seeking silent expressions of personality, attitude, or intention such as happiness, sorrow, reaction to a burglar, or self-directed anger,
  - e asking for improvisations using oral language and movement such as going with a parent into a store to buy some clothes, finding with a friend a wallet with money in it, when with two others finding someone unconscious on a deserted city street, or waking up in a strange place and not remembering how it happened.

When initiating activities such as these, the new teacher should come to class with more material than he thinks he can use, so that he is never at a loss for ideas or new situations. As he gains

39 John Hodgson and Ernest Richards *Improvisation: Discovery and Creativity in Drama* (London: Methuen, 1966) pp. 49-55.



experience he will find that improvisations generate their own spin off activities <sup>40</sup>

- 32 A teacher can help students to begin improvising the reactions of a character in a particular situation by asking questions such as 'How did you get into this spot? What time of day is it? Are you warm or cold? Where is the object? How do you happen to have it?' <sup>41</sup> Such an approach encourages spontaneity and imagination two important qualities in improvised drama
- 33 The teacher can suggest a scene in which all students can participate Then he can introduce an incident to focus the scene and provide opportunities for different characters to react Examples of such scenes might be a store with a broken window an irate storekeeper and a young person a student hangout after school when police enter in search of two popular students accused of car theft a large family gathering when newa arrives that an unpopular and very rich uncle has just died the parlor of an old people's home when it is learned that one of the residents has died suddenly and dinner will be delayed for an hour, and a church youth club invaded by a gang of young toughs Such situations allow everyone to participate in character even if only a few students carry the central episode

In general if the students are dramatically inexperienced the teacher will have to direct more and see that the possibilities of the situation are discussed more thoroughly before the improvisation begins For example students might be led to discuss the kinds of people that would appear in the particular setting the different things they might be doing and how they might react to different incidents Individual students could then role play these people and finally all students could be assigned to play one or another during the scene After the students have had a few minutes to get into their roles and establish the setting the central incident can be introduced Then at the conclusion of the improvisation they can discuss the scene and their reactions to how it was played out As James Moffett notes 'a powerful side effect of improvisation is the dialogue about the improvisation generated before, during and after' <sup>42</sup>

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40 For a wealth of suggestions on ways to introduce dramatic activities see Douglas Barnes *Initiating the Use of Drama in Drama in the English Classroom* pp 23-47 Two other practical source books for teachers are Viola Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theater* (Evanston Ill Northwestern University Press 1963) and Brian Way's *Development Through Drama* (London Longmans Green 1966)

41 Hodgson and Richards *Improvisation* p 39

42 Drama *What Is Happening* p 27

- 34 Students can improvise simple stories, myths, or narrative poems, first doing one character, then the others, and finally getting into groups to develop the whole story. The teacher who knows a series of myths and basic folk tales which he can tell from memory has a ready made repertoire of archetypal stories and situations to stimulate dramatic work.
- 35 A movie camera can be used to encourage movement. Given a camera with five minutes worth of film, a teacher can usually persuade all but the most reluctant students to participate in some form of dramatic action.
- 36 Using the story on the record jacket as background, students can be asked to narrate the record of a musical or musical comedy, improvising dialogue and playing the songs at appropriate points.
- 37 Students can also improvise the beginnings and endings of dramatic situations. This is particularly effective when used in conjunction with the study of scripted drama and professional productions. Through it, students can discover how playwrights get their plays under way and how acts, scenes, and plays are concluded.

At first, student improvisations will probably be relatively formless, fading out rapidly or going on interminably. Such formlessness is inevitable when students are learning to participate, concentrate, and involve themselves imaginatively. However, as their work progresses, students may want to give closer attention to form.

Oral interpretation and the performance of scripted drama is perhaps the most obvious dramatic activity for English classrooms. Performing scripts are natural vehicles for developing students' oral language ability and involving them directly in literature. Yet apart from an occasional perfunctory reading of parts, drama is usually studied in much the same way as a novel or short story through discussion of literary elements, explanations of meanings, lectures about the playwright and his times, and consideration of the play's relevance to students. Therefore the following suggestions seem necessary to indicate ways that a teacher can make the study of plays dramatic. If a teacher has already initiated extensive oral language activities, classroom drama will seem natural. If students expect or demand "conventional" English and reject work which is not specifically related to it, play performances can provide an excellent way to introduce oral work to the class. As in other classroom dramatic activities the objective is not to create memorable or professional performances but to involve the students in learning by doing.

- 38 Students may read and discuss an entire play in a conventional manner, then select and act out those scenes which are most interesting to them or most crucial to the development of the plot.

characterization, or theme. This selective dramatization allows the class to concentrate its attention and do a thorough interpretation without needing large amounts of time. Selective dramatization can also be done prior to or during the students' reading of the entire play if the scenes can be understood in isolation.

- 39 Douglas Barnes recommends that those about to read Shakespeare first dramatize isolated excerpts, scenes, or acts.<sup>43</sup> Students can be asked to dramatize the excerpt as it is, to rewrite it in contemporary English, and then dramatize it, or to improvise their own version without altering the substance of the selection. Each of these approaches gives students the experience of dramatic interpretation and requires some eventual understanding of Elizabethan English and Shakespearean drama. Work on excerpts might be supplemented by filmed or recorded productions of the scenes students are working on.
- 40 Students can also prepare to read a play by first improvising or role-playing situations similar to those faced by characters in the play itself.
- 41 After hearing a brief synopsis of a play, students can be asked to read and discuss various acts and to select those scenes and episodes of greatest importance in staging or creating a filmed version of the play. These key scenes then can be given detailed attention and can be acted out by groups or by the entire class. Groups or individuals can also be assigned to lead discussions of various parts of the play.
- 42 Before reading a play, students can write and act out their own brief scripts. Besides providing experience in dramatic interpretation, the activity emphasizes the relationship of script to performance and performance to meaning.

**SCHOOL SPEECH ACTIVITIES** In addition to oral activities in the classroom, teachers can encourage students to participate in whatever speech activities the school or department may offer. Although public speaking and performing is not the objective of classroom oral work, such activities do provide additional opportunities for students to use language, and may also help create a school climate in which oral work is accepted and valued.

## EVALUATION OF ORAL LANGUAGE

**EVALUATING THE SPEECH ENVIRONMENT OF THE CLASSROOM** Since all perception is inflected by the observer's point of view, it is not surprising to find that teachers and outside observers

43 *Drama in the English Classroom* p. 40

often differ about what is going on in the classroom. A teacher may think that a particular class discussion was productive and went very well, an observer may feel quite differently, noting that the teacher talked seventy-five percent of the time, that only two students actually volunteered comments, and that well over half the class were only feigning interest. In observing his own classes, the teacher might get a clearer picture of his students' point of view by asking himself such questions as the following:

- 1 What percent of the time did I speak?
- 2 What percent of the time did my students speak?
- 3 How many students spoke on the topic being discussed?
- 4 How many spoke voluntarily?
- 5 How many responded directly to what another student said or asked?
- 6 How many spoke to each other rather than to me alone?
- 7 How many indicated some degree of personal involvement?
- 8 How many asked a question that they really seemed to care about?
- 9 How many were involved in conversation or activities apart from the main discussion?
- 10 How many expressed some degree of boredom or disinterest? (Often this is difficult to determine, since seemingly disinterested students may be more involved than they appear to be.)
- 11 How often do students voluntarily refer to previous class discussions, topics, or comments when relevant to the present discussion?
- 12 How often do students indicate in some way or another that they have pursued or thought about some class topic on their own?
- 13 On the basis of what they have said in class, how much do I know about my students' real interests and concerns?

The amount, quality, and spontaneity of students' participation in various oral activities are also indications of a program's effectiveness. Do students speak up in group discussions and do groups get their work done? Do students willingly participate in dramatic activities? Do they prefer individual or group projects? In teacher or student-led discussions is there any evidence of increased reciprocity, relevance, objectivity, and depth? Do students listen and offer feedback to each other, questioning, collaborating and asking for and giving qualification? Do students ever indicate a conscious awareness of speech processes or problems? Do they ever voluntarily inquire into matters related to oral language? Do they seem to listen and respond courteously to opposing ideas, or at least tolerate them?

Despite the obvious hazards of subjective judgment, a teacher who tries to answer such questions should have a reasonably good idea of

his own effectiveness. The teacher need not depend solely on occasional self-questioning, however. There are several other ways in which he can obtain and record relevant data. He can supply a list of questions such as those listed above to an outside observer and ask him to evaluate the answers using the teacher's own criteria. At least one such observer might be a student from someone else's classes. He can audio- or video-tape various class or group discussions throughout the year and compare the sessions. He can keep a simple running tally of the speech behavior on particular days. For example, every Tuesday he might count the number of students who ask questions or the number who say something in response to what another student has said. He can ask his students to fill out questionnaires seeking their reactions to oral activities. He can keep a journal of his own impressions of the class as a speech environment.

**EVALUATING STUDENT PROGRESS** The Tri-University Project on Behavioral Objectives in English has developed a number of performance objectives for oral language and nonverbal communication. For each of fifteen general speaking and listening goals and thirteen nonverbal communication goals, the project report supplies a number of performance and enabling objectives which are designed to indicate student progress toward the goal. For example, in gauging progress toward the goal of understanding the importance and potential of one's voice in communication, students could be asked to demonstrate various means of voice control. Given a speech situation such as a sharply defined role in a one-act play, the teacher could see if the student uses his voice effectively to create character, mood, and tone through use of such devices as shifts in pitch, level, rate, intonation, and pause. Alternatively, the student could be given a part of the alphabet or a series of nonsense words to read aloud to an audience, using only his voice to convey successively, sincerity, sarcasm, and affection.<sup>44</sup> The report does not provide precise criteria or achievement standards for evaluating a student's performance, and the teacher is still left with the problem of deciding which goals to pursue with his particular students. However, the various performance objectives presented do provide many situations in which students can demonstrate and improve their oral ability.

Evaluating individual student progress is particularly difficult, because of both the lack of clear criteria and the time required to assess individual performances. However, when time permits, the teacher should make such individual evaluations. In the course of a

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44 J. N. Hook et al., *Representative Performance Objectives for High School English* (New York: Ronald, 1971), p. 54.

semester, the teacher can observe a student in any or all of the following situations: talking about a particular picture, movie, record, or tape; reading something expressively after a brief period of preparation; participating in a small group discussion; answering open-ended questions with more than simple phrases; giving an impromptu talk, or recounting some incident from his own experience. Using such general criteria as coherence, clarity, relevance, fluency, spontaneity, and effectiveness with listeners, the teacher should be able to determine whether or not the oral work is having any marked effect on the student's speech.

## ORAL LANGUAGE AND THE ENGLISH TEACHER

In this chapter and throughout this text, the English teacher is portrayed not as one presenting information (though skill in presentation is often necessary), but as an energizer and guide, someone using his linguistic awareness and knowledge indirectly to help develop the language skills of young people. This approach to teaching is perhaps more obvious in the study of oral language than it is in the traditional areas of literature, language, and composition, for few English teachers come to oral language with a vast store of information gleaned from college courses.

To work successfully with oral language, the teacher must be a sensitive listener, aware of language situations and their learning potential, language behavior and its effects, and the basic relationship of oral language to all aspects of English as a school subject.

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National Council of Teachers of English distributes a number of publications related to oral language teaching including the following

Barnes Douglas *Drama in the English Classroom* 1968 This book provides rationale theory and many practical suggestions for classroom

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Swensen Lee Q How can you cut a circular cake into eight pieces with only three straight cuts of a knife? A By asking the right question *Media & Methods* 8 (Mar 1972) 27-30 This article presents a series of interesting and stimulating exercises to promote students questioning and inquiry in the classroom

Trad Lyvonne M *Acting as Awareness* *English Journal* 61 (Jan 1972) 72-77 The Author recounts the success of an elective class in acting and describes various awareness games adapted from Viola Spolin's book

Westbrock Leon *Input A Communication Experience* *English Journal* 62 (Oct 1973) 1004-07 The article describes an interesting class project in which high school students talked with elementary school students mentally retarded children and adults and older people in a nursing home and examined the communications problems involved and their own reactions to the experience

Wilkinson Andrew *The Concept of Oracy* *English Journal* 59 (Jan 1970) 71-77 This article is one of the very best providing a sound rationale and suggesting viable methods for improving students oral language in English class

## TEACHING WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Almost every English teacher enters teaching because he enjoys reading. Writing may be something else. The teacher may not have taken a writing course since freshman English.

Lack of professional preparation and the lack of personal satisfaction in his own writing may lead the teacher to a pedagogical ambivalence. He knows that writing is important and he knows that he must teach it. He knows those two things because he has been told them over and over but he also may feel woefully unprepared to teach anyone how to write. Consequently, he may not teach writing at all. Instead, he may assign compositions one after the other but never get around to any real teaching. If a teacher teaches writing, he will want his students to practice. However, merely giving assignments in composition does not necessarily provide that practice.

Teachers may ask if anyone can teach writing with class conditions as they are today. Most English teachers face daily five groups of thirty to forty students each, making a total student load of 150 to 200 or more each day. Back in 1959 James B. Conant recommended that

the time devoted to English composition during the four years should occupy about half the total time devoted to the study of English. Each student should be required to write an average of one theme a week. Themes should be corrected by the teacher. In order that teachers of English have adequate time for handling these themes, no English teacher should be responsible for more than one hundred pupils.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Bryant Conant, *The American High School Today* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959) pp. 50-1.

While many of Conant's recommendations have received national attention this particular recommendation was generally ignored not because it was unwise but because it seemed to many administrators to be impractical and expensive. And if a teacher feels that conditions for teaching writing were once excellent and since have deteriorated let him ponder the following quotation from the first article in the first issue of the first volume of the *English Journal*. The article was titled "Can Good Composition Teaching Be Done Under Present Conditions?"

No

This is a small and apparently unprotected word occupying a somewhat exposed position but it is upborne by indisputable truth

If another answer is possible if good teaching can be done under present conditions it is passing strange that so few teachers have found out how to do it that English composition teachers as a class if judged by criticism that is becoming more and more frequent are so abnormally inefficient. For every year the complaints become louder that the investment in English teaching yields but a small fraction of the desired returns. Every year teachers resign break down perhaps become permanently invalidated having sacrificed ambition health and in not a few instances even life in the struggle to do all the work expected of them. Every year thousands of pupils drift through the schools half cared for in English classes where they should have constant and encouraging personal attention and neglected in other classes where their English should be watched over at least incidentally to emerge in a more or less damaged linguistic condition incapable of meeting satisfactorily the simplest practical demand upon their powers of expression. Much money is spent valuable teachers are worn out at an inhumanly rapid rate and results are inadequate or wholly lacking. From any point of view—that of taxpayer teacher or pupil—such a situation is intolerable.<sup>2</sup>

Another question the teacher may ask is how frequently should students write? Teachers who uphold the theme a week idea often fall back on the truism that practice makes perfect while forgetting another and possibly just as valid truism that practice makes permanent. Although it is obvious that no one could learn to write without some writing practice at least two articles have questioned the theme a week concept.<sup>3</sup> The teacher who is committed to unremitting

<sup>2</sup> Edwin M. Hopkins "Can Good Composition Teaching Be Done Under Present Conditions?" *English Journal* 1 (Jan 1912) 1

<sup>3</sup> Frank Heys "The Theme-A Week Concept: A Report of an Experiment" *English Journal* 51 (May 1962) 320-22. Lois V. Arnold "Writers Cramp and Eyestrain—Are They Paying Off?" *English Journal* 53 (Jan 1964) 10-15

student writing practice might also note the following comment from an 1896 article

In one college every freshman wrote themes steadily through the year with an accompaniment of sound instruction in rhetorical principles In the other college every freshman studied Shakespeare with absolutely no training in rhetoric and with no practice in composition A comparison of themes written in their sophomore year by these students showed that technically the two were fully on a par That is weighty and most significant testimony <sup>4</sup>

Another question asked countless times by innumerable English teachers over the last seventy years is whether students need to know grammar before they can be taught to write No one would argue that any writer must be familiar with the structural system of his language but he may not need any technical information about grammar labels or diagramming It is likely that more research has been conducted on this one topic than almost any other A good summary of that research and its implications can be found in Chapter 3 of J Stephen Sherwin's *Four Problems in Teaching English: A Critique of Research* <sup>5</sup>

Without doubt the most significant question the teacher may ask about teaching writing is What's the point of teaching composition to students who live in a world that praises written literacy but uses it less and less? Why indeed? One of the standard exercises in writing has been to ask students to write a letter of condolence or a thank you note or a letter complaining about some product that doesn't work right Most of these forms have little value in a world of commercial condolence and get well cards and computerized complaint forms So why should time be spent on composition?

## JUSTIFYING A WRITING PROGRAM

Students frequently ask Will we have to write in this class? But the real question is Why do we write at all? Although answers to this question will vary from class to class and from situation to situation at least a few answers ought to be given if the teacher sincerely means them and if the teacher plans to follow up his answers by teaching composition this year The teacher might ask his students why they hated or feared writing and if the responses were not completely hostile and antagonistic the teacher might ask them for help in designing writing experiences they might possibly enjoy The teacher might also use one of the following justifications

4 Two Ways of Teaching English The Century Magazine 51 (Mar 1896) 794

5 Scranton Pa Intext 1969

**WRITING CAN BE AN OUTLET** Writing can be an outlet for students emotions and reactions a kind of catharsis or psychiatric couch a way of getting things out of their system things they could not or would not say otherwise Too many people for far too long have maintained that the purpose of written language is to communicate That is at best only a partial truth For many writing provides a way of maintaining sanity a way of investigating themselves As Eldridge Cleaver writing of his present self and criminal past stated so eloquently

Even though I had some insight into my own motivations I did not feel justified I lost my self respect My pride as a man dissolved and my whole fragile moral structure seemed to collapse completely shattered

That is why I started to write To save myself

I realized that no one could save me but myself The prison authorities were both uninterested and unable to help me I had to seek out the truth and unravel the snarled web of my motivations I had to find out who I am and what I want to be what type of man I should be and what I could do to become the best of which I was capable<sup>6</sup>

**WRITING CAN BE ONE WAY OF LEARNING WHAT THE WRITER THINKS** Teachers have a bad habit of telling students that they must know what they're going to say and how they're going to say it before they do any writing Real writers know that writing is one way of finding out what they have to say and whether that is worth saying in the first place Some thought or feeling may beget writing and writing begets thought and more writing Sometimes a writer does not know his ideas or feelings until he puts them down It sounds inefficient and wasteful of time but it's also true and writers know it The experienced writer may not have thought through organization tone voice or style before he writes To find these elements he must first find precisely what it is he has to say and that he finds by writing

**WRITING CAN GIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATION** Writing can give students an opportunity to communicate ideas feelings and information to a larger audience than they could otherwise reach Anyone who reads newspapers knows school literary magazines or sees dittos occupying an entire bulletin board knows that writing is broadcast more easily than speech But the teacher must follow this assertion by making sure that he does broadcast his students writing if they wish it

<sup>6</sup> Eldridge Cleaver *Soul on Ice* (New York: Delta, 1968) p. 15

**WRITING CAN GIVE STUDENTS AN AWARENESS OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM** Through writing students can be led to look at the world to see what it is all about. Essentially writing can lead students to look closely at appearance and reality and to begin to distinguish and to describe reality. Such understanding may not come easily but it can come if the teacher understands the process of composition and cares about his students and their words.

**WRITING CAN GIVE STUDENTS A FEELING OF PRIDE, SELF-ESTEEM AND SATISFACTION** If writing is sensitively evaluated it can provide students a feeling of a difficult job well done. Perhaps the teacher can reproduce the best writing of his students. Many classes would enjoy choosing and collecting their best writing into a booklet and drawing illustrations to suit it.

**WRITING CAN GIVE THE STUDENTS A CHANCE TO TRY OUT IDEAS** A writer has responsibilities to his audience himself and to truth. However a student writer will not develop these responsibilities without a sense of class rapport and an atmosphere conducive to free exchange and experimentation. Such experimentation carries with it the distinct possibility of failure to communicate clearly or interestingly. However the failure is not the deadening variety it is the momentary setback imposed on one who tries to fly too high too soon. If the audience is sympathetic and helpful then the failure is tolerable and temporary. After all every attempt at writing partially succeeds and partially fails in its attempt to communicate what the writer thought or felt as he wrote.

Thus a teacher may decide to answer the question of why we write operationally by developing alone with class help a writing program that excites and expands students' horizons. However the question cannot permanently be shunted aside.

### FREEZING STUDENT WRITING

If writing is worth teaching why is so much student writing so frozen? Why do students fear pen and paper as much as they do? Students can shun some literature but they rarely hate all of it. If they hate poetry they usually like stories or films. But writing?

**MECHANICS** Teachers have too often stressed the mechanics of punctuation, spelling and capitalization and thereby made students fearful even of beginning a paper. Anyone who writes anything will make some mechanical errors particularly in a first draft. That's human. But some teachers have figuratively spent their teaching lives peering over the shoulders of their students waiting for that inevi-

table spelling goof, run-on or fragment Writing in that kind of situation can mean only pain, frustration, and ultimate failure A student with a real reason to communicate will want to spell and punctuate accurately Then, and only then, will mechanics become a skill he must know and will be willing to learn

**TECHNIQUES OF WRITING** Teachers sometimes inadvertently lie about writing techniques, stating as essential, devices that are only used by some A topic sentence can certainly begin or end a paragraph, but many topic sentences are only implied, and in highly literate writing readers may disagree widely on the specific idea imparted An infinity of ways to structure any piece of writing exists although some are more common than others Pretending that all essayists use comparison-contrast or definition as their basic structure only makes the teacher look foolish If teachers would find out what real writers do today, they should survey writing in real magazines—Atlantic, Redbook, Ployboy, Reader's Digest, Horpers, Ebony, Time, English Journal, for example Teachers may not like some current practices, but students have the right to know what those practices are Teachers who demand that students avoid the sinfultrio of writing faults, beginning a sentence with a conjunction, ending it with a preposition, or splitting an infinitive, have a perfect right to avoid those things in their own writing (if they ever do any), but they ought to question their right to foist off their understanding of the etiquette of grammar on their students If writing communicates what the writer intended, then it works, regardless of the number of writing rules broken or followed

**THE COMPOSING PROCESS** Teachers sometimes misunderstand the composing process the method real writers use to determine how to place one word after another to get an idea or feeling across clearly and interestingly Teachers sometimes make organizing almost a fetish, demanding that students outline with Roman numerals or demanding that students think out carefully what they're going to say before putting anything on the paper Demands like these will freeze most students, just as they would petrify any writer, and writing and students and the English class activities will all suffer

Teachers often ask questions such as, "You must remember \_\_\_\_\_, don't you?" or "Didn't anyone ever teach you \_\_\_\_\_?" or "Of course, you had \_\_\_\_\_ last year didn't you?" or "At your age, haven't you learned \_\_\_\_\_ yet?" The blanks can be filled in with any number of words grammar, punctuation, spelling, ways to begin a paragraph sentence structure or anything the teacher can't teach and hopes fervently someone previously has tried to teach By

employing this doctrine of fallacious assumptions the teacher can avoid teaching anything at all—and frighten and bewilder his or her students. Teachers employing this method usually end up with reputations for having high standards. Actually they have neither standards nor understanding of students or the process of writing.

**MYTHS ABOUT WRITING** Paul O'Dea and Donald M. Murray have itemized some of the pervasive myths about writing

#### O'Dea

- 1 Students learn to write well by reading great literature
- 2 Students learn to write essays by analyzing professionally written ones
- 3 Students learn to write well by studying grammatical analysis
- 4 Students learn to write better by reconstructing other people's sentences
- 5 Students learn to write better if extensively criticized

#### Murray

- 1 Correct usage comes first
- 2 Each student paper must be corrected by the teacher
- 3 Students should write a few papers but write them well
- 4 Students do not want to write
- 5 A good reader will become a good writer
- 6 The best subject is a literary subject
- 7 Grade levels are significant in teaching writing
- 8 Students learn best by imitating models of great writing
- 9 You can teach writing by talking
- 10 You can't teach writing

### ENGLISH DOESN'T COME NATURALLY

In two of the most delightful texts on writing, *Telling Writing* and *Uptought*, Ken Macrorie defines and exemplifies what he means by *English*.<sup>7</sup> English is writing few human beings could write outside English class or the government service. Undefined by any human feeling, English is writing performed as a task, wooden writing as the result of an English teacher's request for a theme (and no one

7 Paul O'Dea, *Five Myths in the Teaching of Composition* (English Journal 54 (Apr. 1965) 328-30) and Donald M. Murray, *A Practical Method of Teaching Composition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) pp. 105-7.

8 *Telling Writing* (New York: Hayden, 1970) and *Uptought* (New York: Hayden, 1970). Macrorie's high school text on writing is *Writing to Be Read* (New York: Hayden, 1968). These three books ought to be among the very first books an English teacher buys, partly because they're helpful and well written, partly because Macrorie is one of the rare writers about writing who knows what it is all about (and what it isn't about at all) and he knows and likes and respects young people.



outside English class ever writes a theme—for that matter, no one outside English class writes a book report and few would ever write a five-paragraph paper) English is without personality or purpose writing where the two most obvious questions worth asking about any writing 'What kind of person wrote it?' and "Why would any body care to write about this?" are unanswerable. Nobody wrote it, and nobody really cared to write about it. Somebody told nobody to write nothing and nobody did just that. And anybody who likes to really mutually exclusive) say what they've been indoctrinated to English writing or English writers. English writers (these terms are really mutually exclusive) say what they've been indoctrinated to believe in language that is nonhuman robot-like. There's nothing wrong with the language except that no one ever talked that way.

### THE STUDENT

A college student is much different from a high school student because they are on their own some for perhaps the first time. A student is a person devoted to books or learning. This is especially true of a college student. When a young man or woman starts paying for an education he learns to get the most out of it.

College educations have become an important asset in today's world. The college student realizes this and tries hard and some times even harder to study and comprehend so that after he gets his degree he will be able to put his education to good use.

The theme goes on and on (and it is a theme, not writing). Except for pronoun shifts, there is little technically wrong with the paper nothing except that nothing is said.

What produces English? Writing about topics students don't care about topics which encourage generalization in place of first hand experience. English is writing aimed at the teacher only and designed to be read for only one purpose, that of correcting mechanical errors.

Students get used to writing English since it makes some English teachers happy, and these students perpetuate English writing it themselves and praising it in others.

The following three examples of student writing have been read and analyzed by many English teachers and high school students. Without much additional information or knowledge those teachers and students could be pigeonholed as advocates or nonadvocates of English on the basis of their reactions.

### AMERICAN EDUCATION IS A FAILURE

From the time of the birth of the United States as a democratic nation the education of its people has become incessantly con-

sequent not only for the protection of its future generations but of the posterity of the world. Education has become the wealth of our nation, the backbone and grit of its people. Upon education lies the attainment of any body, upon lack of unsufficient education the aptability of such a body to fall into oppression.

When a power begins to lag it must yield to the fact that another force is exceeding it. So it is with education. The down fall is not due to having been surpassed but to the failure to recognize that impending transcendence. We must awaken to the realization that American education does fall short to foreign standards. It is not too late to repair the impairment but it must be done immediately and not just by a few insignificant individuals but unfalteringly as a potent mass.

When we do fully realize that American education is failing we must observe why. The biggest problem is the negligence of the elementary schools to teach the pupils to study, to train their minds to remain concentrated upon one center of thought and to think. To establish such a program academic subjects of deeper valuation than health must be required such as a foreign language. By the time American boys and girls graduate to secondary schools there are too many sub average pupils who can pass as the average that even the standard is lowered for the average pupil and for those if any who are above par.

Then how can the pupils be reproached for their ignorance when the true fault is of the teacher who is easily swayed by the child whose brain is being racked from excessive studying? The teachers are the determiners of the quality of our education. It is they who set the standards to which the student must strive. The teacher must prove that he is the superior and that what he instructs is to be fulfilled and then he will win the respect of even the pupils.

If education were a privilege instead of a requirement even the teachers would rank with more outstanding qualifications. With an education system such as ours there is no provision by which we can illuminate those pupils who do not want to learn or simply refuse to learn. These are the students who build up an atmosphere over the class room, they are the smart alecks who know more than the teacher is supposed to know. Yes we have no need for such ones if we are successfully going to strengthen our national education system.

Most high school graduates are not really prepared for college when they are seventeen, not with our present instructive system. They have not yet learned to study to their highest and most productive capacity. Yet the pupils are not to be blamed for it is the instructor as well who are at fault. With both the teachers and the students cooperating the United States can once again raise its standards for higher education and again compete with rapidly advancing foreign education.

### DOES ANYBODY CARE?

It was a Friday in the middle of a hot July in New York city I had a hour off for lunch I went in a small roadside resturant I was eating a small bit sized hamburger that cause a ridiculous price and a large Coke that was mostly ice

It was about one and everything was like normal, in an uproar I was sitting on a red stool next to the picture window that was on the front of the store

I was peering out of the window in a daze I was staring at a lamp post it felt good to stare, just like sleeping

I notices a lady carrying a package She looked about twenty five and has red short hair She was tall and had a orangish like dress to match her hair Suddenly a car drove up and grabed the lady and forced her in the car She screamed and it appeared that she was being kidnapped I dropped my hamburger I noticed something strange and unhuman Everybody just glanced at what was happening and kept doing what they were doing I felt a little weird while I sunk into my chair

Then I wondered is everybody mad? They all look like cool metal robots that have been programed only to function and work

I looked up at all the skyrapers, in sort of a daze and my eyes watered at the dingy gray building that looked like a tumstone I had a frightening feeling I was in a giant seminary and this was the resting place of the hold human race Then I fell within my self

### THE STRANGEST THING ABOUT LIFE

One Sunday afternoon my mother and I took a visit to the hospital in which my little nece were in there were people standing all around the big huge window which the new born babys were place behind in order that the breath of the outsiders would not touch the babys face It seems so strang that the tiny little creatures will ever grow up to be as big as you or I But the strangest thing of all is that when you are first born you cry, but all around you smile and when you die you smile but all around you cry

English people liked "American Education Is a Failure" because it was profound, used big words, and it was organized They disliked "The Strangest Thing about Life" and "Does Anybody Care?" because they were brief, undeveloped, and full of mechanical errors Non-English people felt 'American Education Is a Failure' was pompous and devoid of any meaning except the desire for a good grade They liked 'The Strangest Thing About Life' and 'Does Anybody Care?' because both tried to say something worth saying Even the non English people were bothered by some of the mechanical errors, but they did not let it obscure their feeling for the sincerity of the writing A particularly revealing comment came from a fourteen-year old boy who liked 'Does Anybody Care?' When asked

why, he said, "That was great Boy, especially that last line It sounded like it really could happen, especially getting the hamburger and coke . The title really made me look at it I liked the lamppost part, daydreaming feels good, and I do a lot of that at school . It described everything real good, no fancy words It showed me how much people really cared about something—none—a real good explanation of the truth The guy telling the story was just like anybody else "

**PLANNING THE WRITING PROGRAM** Most English teachers agree that writing is an important part of the English curriculum and that some programs dealing with it need to be evolved Teachers often disagree markedly about what those programs should contain

**TEXTBOOKS, COMMERCIAL OR TEACHER-MADE** Some teachers and many textbooks maintain that students should begin with simple sentences After mastering that concept they should move on to compound sentences, to complex sentences, to the paragraph, to three-paragraph essays, and finally to five paragraph essays Other teachers and other books have suggested that students first work with narrative prose, then move to descriptive, then expository, and finally argumentative prose, with some students even reaching the apex of writing, the research paper Still others argue that students need to learn the so-called etiquette of writing—the mechanics—and master correctness before they begin any real work

Unhappily, the notion that students must master the simple sentence before they move on to the compound does not hold up well under examination Very small children use compound or complex structures as well as simple utterances and students who must write only simple sentences will know what the teacher does not that their writing is not even an approximation of their normal speech Likewise, beginning with narration and moving to description has a spurious logic to it since most real writing is a combination of many different forms The more artificial the classroom writing, the more right students have to question the worth of the writing program Emphasizing mechanics gives a false sense of security to students who may ultimately believe that correct grammar equals good writing For students who have trouble mastering mechanics as many professional writers have in the past English class becomes an exercise in horror or frustration and the writing they are forced to do bears no relationship to any writing any human being could care about, either as writer or reader

Many writing programs are not devised by teachers but by the authors of texts adopted by a curriculum committee No matter how excellent a textbook is, it was never intended for any specific class

but rather for all classes at a particular grade level across the country. No matter how carefully the text is designed, by its own nature it will not be entirely applicable, and the teacher intelligently using the book will have to adjust it to his students, supplementing and revising when necessary. Some teachers, out of laziness, indifference, or ignorance, force the class to adjust to the text.

If a teacher or system insists on a text for writing (and many teachers teach effectively without any composition text), perhaps he would be wiser to look at many texts and prepare materials based on the best sections or assignments from each. After he has several years of experience and feels comfortable with teaching and students, he might consider writing his own materials tailored to the needs and interests of his students. That may sound like hard work. It is, but if the real aim of teaching is to reach as many students as possible, a teacher-written text could be one answer. Inexpensive in cost but admittedly expensive in teacher time, the homemade teacher-written text does have some distinct advantages. The material is designed in a way no ordinary textbook could be for specific students and their problems, needs, and concerns, the material can be organized in a manner comfortable to students and teacher, and the material can be taken from many sources, including local ones interesting to students but too specialized for a nationwide text.

**TWO CURRICULUM PROBLEMS AND A SUGGESTION** Some English departments have developed their own individualized writing programs that may be aimed at the real needs of real students in one specific school. However, any departmental recommendations on writing, no matter how good or bad, no matter how sequential or cumulative, are useful only as guidelines. Each English teacher has his own world—his classroom—and a departmental program is useful only if translated by him into individualized teaching. A perplexing problem for the department attempting to devise sound writing recommendations is the relatively recent mass mobility of many Americans. No department or teacher can safely assume that a sizeable number of students in any one class necessarily started in the local schools. Indeed, in many classes the teacher would not be surprised to find that less than half the students had lived in the school district for more than five years. Well intended as a school writing program might be, then, it is difficult to design and virtually impossible to effect. Students insist on moving where their parents move to the distress of teachers and curriculum planners.

Practically and ultimately the individual teacher will need to develop a writing program for his students that starts where they are, not where they should be, and then shows some possibility of taking them further. Obviously all this begins with a teacher com-

mitted to learning about writing to learning about his students, to working individually with them at their speed on their writing problems, to providing ample opportunities for writing worth the effort and to reacting to (reacting not grading) their work

## **FREEING STUDENTS TO WANT TO WRITE**

Before the teacher can expect students to engage in the difficult and often frustrating act of writing, the teacher must develop a class rapport and atmosphere conducive to writing. Students must be willing to listen to each other and read each other's work with respect, and the teacher must develop a spirit of critical sympathy based on mutual respect of teacher for students and students for each other.

How can the teacher do that? By acting as a model accepting students as they are, not as they should be. Class rapport and morale is developed when the teacher recognizes how difficult the act of writing can be. He must be realistic about his students' work, not accepting their rhetorical limitations as final, but accepting reality and helping them learn how to handle words more effectively. Intelligent practice in writing is a necessity, but practice does not mean simple repetition.

What techniques can the teacher use to free students from the fear of writing?

**THAT FIRST DAY** The teacher can begin the first day of class tuning himself to his students' their moods, their fears and worries, their immediate concerns. If the teacher does this, he will find the best opportunities for motivating student writing—and he will find not one but many writing opportunities.

On that first morning, a new teacher probably is filled with as many fears as the majority of his students. He might begin by exploring those mutual feelings. After the usual first-day-of-class preliminaries, the teacher might ask: 'How did you feel when you stepped inside the room this morning? Did you feel anticipation, fear, tension, excitement, curiosity, regret, eagerness, dread, boredom? Did your pulse beat a little faster? Was your stomach tight? How did your knees feel? Were the palms of your hands sweaty? What did you do? Did you come to school alone or with friends? Did you meet a friend or several friends after you got here? How did you feel together? Did you forget anything—lunch money, notebook, pencil or pen?' After asking some specific questions, ask each student to write about how he felt and how he now feels (the teacher may find it a good plan, particularly on the first day, to suggest an opening line).

And here is as good a time as any for the teacher to do his own assignment. While his students are writing how they felt, he can try to put into words his own fears and anticipations.

After the teacher has read through all the papers, he can select several that represent different attitudes and different ways of writing to read anonymously to the class. The students might enjoy hearing someone else's different way of viewing the same situation or knowing that someone else had the same feelings that they had. They might also appreciate the teacher's feelings of apprehension and might share with him their problems of getting their feelings into the right words in the right arrangement. Everyone in the group—the teacher and each student—recognizes the moment when he reads a piece of writing and thinks: That's exactly how I have felt! Why couldn't I put it into words like that? Everyone has an innate and real desire to share his thoughts and feelings and reactions as clearly, truthfully and interestingly as possible—a desire to communicate through the written word. Here then the teacher is beginning with a basic motivation for writing.

**WORD PLAY** To help students realize the importance of selecting the right word for their purposes, the teacher can provide situations for playing around with words: sharpening their awareness of individual words, their sounds, rhythms, rhymes and effects on the writer and the reader. One way to organize this type of word play is to have students think of words that bounce, words that ring, words that are quiet or noisy, words that are happy or sad, words that are violent or peaceful. Students could write their ideas on paper, then read them aloud to the class as the teacher or a student writes them on the chalk board. As the list grows, students will think of better words, and an awareness of individual words and their power or weakness may be instilled.

Another way of playing with words is to dream up various figures of speech: metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification. Students derive macabre pleasure from making menu metaphors for school lunches. Hamburgers and buns with green beans become shoe leather slapped between styrofoam served with worms just emerged from cocoons. For hyperbole, the teacher could use starters such as: He told a lie so big, or I am so tired I, or I am so excited I could. Students can bring the classroom to life by personifying furniture, objects and special decorations, the flag, and even the windows and peopling it for a scene from real life. The class could then discuss together which figures of speech seem most effective and why, sharpening their perception and freeing their imaginations for some fresh, new ways of using comparison.

**REACTING TO LITERATURE** An easy method of gauging a student's reaction to literature is to read a short story to the class for example Ring Lardner's *Haircut* Richard Connell's *The Most Dangerous Game* Sakis *The Interlopers* or anything else that will provoke student response After reading the story the teacher can ask students to write their answers to a couple of very simple questions Did you like the story? and Why did you feel the way you did? Admittedly the answers may be very brief but they still can give the teacher much information about needed skills and the kind of writing these students might be able to do Another method is to ask students to react to the tone or mood of a poem or story or to re create the sound in rhythm tone or mood of a poem free verse or parody, perhaps by retelling a personal experience parallel in tone or mood to that of the original literary work

The following student papers came from a second track class of eleventh graders dealing with the literature of loneliness These students were considered to have low ability in language skills

The day I was placed in the Juvenile Ward of \_\_\_\_\_ County's sheriff's department for a runaway and by request for a Chins Petition (Child in need of supervision) This request was my own but I had no idea I'd be placed in jail on a wait sentence My attitude was disrupted and I felt alone Where were you I tell you where in a place so cold that one of your wildest dreams could not have imagined it to be a reality to yourself In this case its to bad to be true! Jail is a terrible and most lonesome place for anyone who has to spend any amount of time in it What shook me up before I was let out was that some people spend their whole lives in these kinds of places Believe me it does have a great deal of bearing on your attitude Not so far as to make you sure of yourself but make you unstable in the way of confinement (boy)

The time I felt alone and lonesome was when I left home for a period of six months I saw my family now and then but still I didn't want to go home I thought to myself If you go home you'll just end up leaving again My father and I were always arguing We would even argue for the simplest reasons Finally the time came when I was going to tell him a thing or two The time came and we were really arguing He even wanted to strike me So it end up that I went to live with my grandmother I loved her and I was her favorite grandson She would usually let me do anything I wanted to do I could get away with anything But yet I was still lonely I missed the noise my seven little brothers made and the yelling of my one and only sister trying to quiet them down But most of all I missed my mother Every time I would think of her I would remember the sadness in her face and the tears rolling down her cheek as she begged me not to leave That was what really made me lonely I'll admit I had a beautiful time when I was away from home But



during all that time my heart was broken with loneliness I tried to hide my loneliness and did a pretty good job of it for awhile that is until I just couldn't take it any more I was afraid to ask my father to let me be a part of the family again And you know what he said to me He said no matter where you are you'll always be a part of my family (boy)

I am hardly ever lonely the only time I ever felt alone or that I can remember is when I lost or thought I had lost my best friends because I stood up for what I felt I said that I was not going to be seen with them if they continued the things they were doing because they were wrong But instead they continued being wrong but did not continue including me in anything That is why you should have many friends and choose them carefully I didn't have any girl friends then except maybe one But she was not very close So for about a week I stayed home doing nothing and not receiving any phone calls I felt so sad that I called him and told him I was sorry So I was included in their plans once more Then really felt lonelier than ever Because really in a sense I had deserted myself I wasn't like that I always had a sick tight feeling in my throat and stomach I could hardly live with myself for saying I was wrong and I was sorry When I wasn't I took a lot of courage but I again told them I wasn't going to do something like that to myself and that they were the wrong ones I was again lonely But not as much as before I only took two days and I had other friends Good ones too But that slight loneliness stayed with me not from losing my other friends but because I deserted myself I still think about it some times But I don't like to It's an awful feeling Every time I see him I remember (girl)

It was one of those days when anything was going right I was feeding hay off a wagon when the girl I was going with pulled in the yard with her mother she was breaking up with me because of a little lie I told her (I told her that I called another girl just to see how she was doing but she took it wrong) and tried to kill herself Her mom made us break up because of that After they left I told my parents about it and they got mad this was when I felt alone all because of a lie— (boy)

**REACTING TO FILM** Another method would involve showing a film and asking students to respond to similar questions A film might involve students even more than a short story especially if the film is one new to them Recently some high school students watched the film *The End of One* which the Learning Corporation of America catalogue summarizes as

#### THE END OF ONE

Only recently has man become aware of the need to concern himself with the ecology of his earth—to consider the interrelationship of all living things in the web of life In this strange haunt

ing almost mystical film the camera watches seagulls soar swoop and scavenge for food from a huge garbage dump At a distance a lone, frail bird limps haltingly along a polluted stretch of beach stumbling dying while his fellows continue their raucous competition unconcerned uncaring Through a powerful blend of sound and visual images the film recounts the bare facts of a simple natural event Yet its interpretation evokes deep reflective thought on many levels suggesting a death knell for our environment an allegory on greed a parody of life Color seven minutes

Teachers asked the students to write brief answers on 3 x 5 cards to their two questions or simply to respond any way they wished Although the responses were short the words were useful in giving the teacher some idea of the kinds of students he had their linguistic abilities and the skills they had or needed

I thought this movie was about the pollution it was pretty good on the impact except I didn't like all those birds in my ear I had a definite impact on my ears (Tenth grade boy)

Yeah I thought that was a really good movie because most of us take dying for granted but when I saw the bird die it changed my whole point of view (Ninth grade boy)

The film was made to stress how different the human race is from any other animal—including birds When one of our fellow humans are in pain or dying we'll take time to stop and help them But birds just leave and go on looking for food or something else not caring about anyone else (Twelfth grade girl)

The film was ok it did not make my day though The point of the film to me was not to be a seagull and not to eat food out of a dump (Twelfth grade boy)

Yes I thought it was very good but sad too! The end of one I thought was the end of one but soon the end of many more because of the trash and gross stuff they eat and because of the oil in the water I suppose it was a film to get the point of pollution across (Tenth grade girl)

The film was about a Bird that didn't want to eat trash So the bird starved to death (Tenth grade boy)

I liked it very much because I makes you think There was a lot of symbolism in this film All the birds rep all the people of the world How they don't care one thing about each other Just themselves Every time the truck would come back and move the trash the birds just moved where the trash went This shows how people are easily swayed The old bird shows how an outcast can't survive in today's congested world (Tenth grade girl)

I thought it was boring It was probably symbolic of something but I don't care to know what it is (Twelfth grade boy)

I liked it because it seemed to be very symbolic I felt that it represented destruction in the world The people (represented by

birds) were so engrossed in themselves and getting enough food in other words being greedy, that they wouldn't help each other. The old bird represented someone that needs love and he died because of lack of it. The film shows how selfish, greedy, and self-centered people can destroy themselves and the world around you. (Tenth-grade girl)

Yes, I liked this film. It made a lot of sense. I thought the film was put together very nicely. The way they kept flashing back to all the birds eating trash to that one last bird that represented the death of all the birds one by one. (Twelfth-grade girl)

The film was strange in the way that the point was brought out. It showed that the ones with ambition and strength are the ones that survive. Either the dead bird was too old, or he was just lazy. (Tenth-grade boy)

I didn't like the film because I thought it was sad and because I didn't understand what they were trying to say. But they filmed it good. (Eleventh-grade girl)

I can't say that I really liked or disliked the film. It was very meaningful and put its points across with stinging reality. (Eleventh-grade girl)

Yea I liked the film because the bird died, the bird must have had a bad case of heartburn. (Ninth-grade boy)

I liked it cause there wasn't any lectureing in the movie. And because it was short and fast plus know borring parta. (Ninth-grade boy)

**THE ESSENCE OF ANY THING** As John Moffitt's poem "To Know Any Thing" suggests, to really know someone or something, a person must become that person or thing. That is what a writer must do to capture truth in his writing. Each person or animal or object or system has its own inherent "thingness." It is important for the student to be able to see clearly for himself that particular quality. A cartoonist who draws caricatures of public figures has this skill. He exaggerates and brings to his viewer's attention the uniqueness of his subject. A teacher can mention things such as "The thing about my dog is his bark", or "The thing about the principal is his scowl", or "The thing about roses is soft petals" or "The thing about a school classroom is the SMELL." After using several examples of his own, the teacher can then have students write half a dozen of their own to be turned in. The teacher can then select and duplicate some of the most colorful of these to be handed out to the class the next day. This technique can give students ideas about expressing the essence of a thing and the different ways people may look at the same object.

From this beginning the teacher could bring in posters, collages, photographs, slides or records and ask each student to choose one word that represents the essence of each. Then, in a photograph, for

example, the students can observe every detail creating its total impact—color, form, shapes, postures and expressions of people, clouds—and show how each adds to its feeling. If music is used, the same technique could be followed, with students showing how rhythm, instruments, and tone create a total effect. Students might then want to produce collages or sound tapes of their own, letting the rest of the class guess what the "thingness" of each creation was intended to be.

Another method of discovering essence employs poems, then a short story, an essay, and a novel. Here the student is asked to make a generalized statement and then to take his generalization and give it specificity, citing examples to illustrate and explain how the author achieves his total effect.

A relaxed and easy way to lead students to look at the same subject from different points of view uses the first football game of the season. Here, the teacher asks his students to observe the behavior of various types of spectators as well as the players themselves: the Pep Club girl, the "grandstand coach," the woman attending because it's the "social" thing to do, the parents of one of the players, the band member hanging onto a frosty instrument, the person selling concessions, the center, the quarterback, the tackle, the "bench-rider," the trainer, the coach. In class, students can discuss what they've observed and then can write about the next game from the perspective of one of the types.

**THE JOURNAL** Journals are useful places to jot down daily ideas, reactions, or sensory impressions. Although journal entries are personal and do not need to be developed into long papers, they often can become the nucleus of a paper later in the year after the idea, impression, or reaction has had sufficient gestation time. The journal entries below were written by eleventh and twelfth-grade students and suggest a wide range of possibilities for further expansion. Many could be developed if the writer cared to do so.

Today, I made just one mistake so far. I got out of bed.  
Today is miserable Monday. Monday is Horace because both are horrible names.

Today I'm angry. I heard something by chance this morning before the first bell rang that I didn't like at all. I was called a nigger. But I didn't do or say anything. This person was stupid and stupid people don't realize what they are saying. But what the hell I'm still surviving. I think.

When you fondly remember someplace when you were happy when you were young, never go back to that place.

The first child is an experiment.

Beware of a cat's paw. It is soft and delicate but underneath there are claws.

Does God make boo boos?

To hate—what a horrible verb—I wonder if man created it?

A television set reminds me of a gossiping old lady. It sits squatting with its mouth continually open, blabbing for the most part continual nonsense. What a shame gossiping women or men don't have buttons to turn them off.

Do you suppose there's a general psychological truth about people who drive small cars?

You can only really hate someone when you've really loved.

We've been told that in heaven there'll be no pain, grief at all. Here on earth life would be boring without these things. How will we ever be able to stand it?

There's something really beautiful and pure about a perfectly blank piece of typing paper. It's too bad I have to spoil all that beauty by putting my bleak and puny and stupid words on it.

Why is it that people will readily tell you all their problems, but if you try to tell your problems to them, they'll change the subject as fast as possible?

Interruptions come easily to me. I wait for them.

Part of an answer is part of the way you find it.

Is simplicity an escape from responsibility? I think so. If things were cut to their simplest form, there would be less things to be responsible for. But I think it would be dull with nothing to worry about. After all, aren't worry and anticipation things that keep men alive?

When a person is surrounded by a group of people who shed friends and promises as readily and often as they do their socks, isn't it a good thing to have friends who have "smelly feet"?

Color is the illiterate's alphabet.

The lover first fools others. He then proceeds to fool himself.

**FREE WRITING** Free writing, a technique developed at length in the books of Ken Macrone, provides a kind of warm up exercise for writers, allowing them to begin an idea or impression or reaction and drop it as fast as they wish. Ideally, like journal entries, free writing can be expanded into longer papers later, but also like journal entries free writing is not limited to topics or ideas that will or must be expanded. Free writing can begin with a statement or a reaction or an impression or some nugget of an idea. Free writing is intended to open up the student, to get him writing, and to allow and encourage him to write, independent at this stage of any audience. If this technique has any other contribution to make, it is in developing a student's authentic voice, encouraging him to be honest in his comments, and showing him how to explore the many ways he can look at many topics.

The simplest way to begin free writing is to ask students to take out a sheet of paper and start. The first time or two, students will invariably ask, "What shall I write about?" The answer is, "Any-

thing at all. If a student asks (and he will) "What can I write about?" I've got *nothing* to say. Then the teacher can urge the student to begin by repeating his question again and again. Even the most antagonistic student and the most frozen writer can repeat the same words only so many times before he will say something else. (The world record may belong to one student who wrote something like eight straight pages narrow lined of one four letter word before he grew bored with his monomania.) Nobody's interested in absolutely nothing and if the teacher really allows and encourages his students to write what they want and if the student trusts the teacher enough to let him see his free writing the students can and will write and what they have to say may surprise the teacher both in its maturity and its style.

The following words comprise one piece of free writing by an eleventh grader a student whose teacher had decided he was a linguistically inept basket case.

The—what—the walls crowd in on you in this room anyway after lunch they really do. If nothing in this class ever happens soon I'm going to go nuts. That comes from *Catcher in the Rye*. I think. What doesn't come from Salinger? I really don't know. I really don't. I'm not a Salinger thing a wriggly pin stuck thing a thing that Holden can hold on to. I like that Holden can hold on to. Maybe that's what Holden is like me somebody trying to hold on to something. Don't worry I'm going to keep on writing till I get something down I will. I really will. Maybe you'd like to hear about my childhood. That's good. But I don't want to hear about it. What shall I tell you about my childhood? What joy? What pain? What pleasures? What a life! What a soap opera! Now let's turn back the clock of time to the troubled year of 1954 a time of crisis when I was hatched if I'd been a twin I would have been batched. A wriggly wriggly pin stuck (I was too) thing thriving bawling a what? And here I am today. What's inbetween? What now? Still a wriggly wriggly pin stuck thriving bawling bigger something a bigger what. And tomorrow? You guessed it.

Originally the piece was shown to a college professor as proof positive that free writing wouldn't work since it produces junk like this.

**FLEXIBILITY** The teacher should be perceptive enough and flexible enough to change his daily lesson plan when he knows that his students are emotionally involved in an immediate event whether it be something of wide interest such as the 1972 Olympic killings an election a local or school controversy problem or tragedy or something as simple as a change in the weather. A teacher can turn this emotional tide into written expression. If for example students are angry with school board members who insist on a school dress code the

teacher has an ideal opportunity to help students organize arguments expressing a particular point of view and intended for a particular audience. Students might discuss how emotion and generalizations will not persuade the board members. They might discuss what kinds of arguments the school board might listen to and how they could be most effectively presented. They could discuss ways of finding counter arguments to the board's position. Perhaps they might wish to present their finished argument to the school principal first to see if they can get him on their side. How can they sway the principal? Such discussions can produce some of the most effective ingredients of writing.

**THE COMPOSING PROCESS** Put simplistically, the composing process consists of placing one word after another until they all add up to something important to the writer. But how does the writer choose which word goes first or second or tenth? Indeed, how does the writer go about writing? What happens when a professional writer picks up his pen or sits at his typewriter?

The composing process is something of a mystery mixed with mystical revelation that the teacher must communicate. The only way he can do this is if he writes and knows the occasional joys, frequent agonies, and constant frustrations of the process.

### **THOUGHT BEGETS WRITING WRITING BEGETS THOUGHT**

If a writer were asked why he writes, he might say, 'because I have something I want to say and I don't know what it is until I write it.' He's right—he wasn't being funny, and he did underscore the paradox of the process of writing. An idea or impression or reaction leads the writer to begin putting words on a page. In the process of trying to pin down whatever it was that he wanted to say, he almost inevitably discovers unforeseen difficulties, ambiguities or puzzlements, and they lead him to think further and try new words to capture whatever it is that he is now trying to say. Essentially thought begets writing and writing begets more thoughts which in turn beget more writing. Although an occasional writer deviates little from his original purpose, audience, voice, or organization, most writers change their direction at least once, perhaps several times, often tossing out respectable prose and finely-honed words until they discover whatever it is they are after. In effect, writers may write to find their topics, to discover through writing what they feel or think or know.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> A stimulating and discerning essay on the composing process is James M. McCrimmon's *Writing As a Way of Knowing* in *The Promise of English* NCTE Distinguished Lectures 1970 (Urbana Ill. NCTE, 1970) pp 115-30.

Writing is almost never easy for professionals or students. It is almost never a joy until it is finished. If then. However, it can be satisfying if the writer feels he has been honest and has written what he truly feels or knows or believes about a subject at a particular point in time.

**DISCUSSING THE COMPOSING PROCESS** One way for the teacher to communicate his understanding of the composing process is to bring to class occasionally some writing he has done and to talk about why he wrote it, what he was trying to say, what problems he had, and how satisfied he is with its present form. If every teacher were compelled to wear his rhetorical hair shirt at least once a year, he might be more humble and almost certainly would be more compassionate and helpful in evaluating student papers.

Teachers should frequently take a composition assignment and devote considerable time to helping students see the possibilities open to them in their writing. As suggested earlier, the teacher could suggest (not demand) possible opening sentences, modes of organization, or possible audiences. But whatever he does, the teacher's job is to help the students, particularly with problems that loom in the assignment right then.

One exercise that seems baby simple but has many ramifications is to put a series of kindergarten sentences on the blackboard or on a transparency and ask students to play with the variety of possibilities for combining or altering the utterances. One such series recently used in a high school is given below.

*Gunsmoke is on television  
It is exciting  
It stars James Arness  
He plays Matt Dillon  
Matt is a U.S. Marshal  
The show is on Monday night  
It lasts one hour  
I have watched it for a long time  
I don't like it much anymore*

Students usually regard the sentences as dumb. Nonetheless, they often get caught up by the possible ways they can be joined together. Below are listed a few ways students have combined the sentences.

*Gunsmoke is on television and it is exciting and it stars James Arness and he plays Matt Dillon  
Gunsmoke, an exciting television show, stars James Arness playing Matt Dillon, a U.S. Marshal, every Monday night. It lasts one hour.  
I've watched it for a long time, but I don't like it much anymore.  
Television's Gunsmoke, the long-running Monday night western,*



starring James Arness as U S Marshal Matt Dillon may run forever I couldn't care less I've watched it too long and I don't ever want to see it again

**USING THE DICTIONARY AND THESAURUS** The dictionary and the Thesaurus, two basic tools of the writer, can be introduced in a far more interesting and significant way than is usually the case in exercises like the one above because as students try to find better, more descriptive, more exact diction, they will need constantly to check their new words to find meanings and to discover if the word is legitimately used and conveys the meaning and mood intended Too often, an English teacher assigns vocabulary lists or asks students to look up the meaning of a word Unhappily for that teacher and even more unhappily for students, few words have only one meaning Witness the confusion of the student assigned to find the meaning of "peers," as used in "democracy means a land of peers, not superiors and inferiors" Peering at the dictionary, he looked irritated and then bewildered as he discovered, and reported back to the teacher, that "peers" meant titled noblemen

Obviously, the search for new words should involve a Thesaurus Although the Thesaurus can seem enormously valuable to some students, the teacher should warn them that there is no such animal as an exact synonym for any word in the language Even *or*, *on*, and *the* are not exactly synonymous, close though they may be, and *one*, *once*, and *first* are not likely to be used in precisely identical situations Glancing through the Thesaurus in search of a substitute for exciting students will see excitement, and if they persist, excite, then excited, and finally exciting Sure that they have found synonyms, they may write, "Gunsmoke is warm (or glowing, fervid, swelling heart-stirring, thrilling, soul-stirring, agonizing, sensational, hysterical, overpowering overwhelming, piquant, spicy provocative, or tantalizing)" Thus, just as the Thesaurus can be an invaluable tool, it can be a frightful danger One teacher, bored with a student's overuse of *very*, asked her to find a synonym The student did and wrote the sentence, "She was an immensely fragile woman"

Another exercise that will encourage students to play with words and to learn something about the difficulties and satisfactions of putting them together is to have them link an abstraction to a concrete noun, adjective, or phrase For instance love (freedom democracy, friendship, hatred) is (blind a warm puppy a hot dog Michele, wonderful, prejudice) A few years ago a raft of *Happiness Is* and *Love Is* books sold widely, so students are used to the linking device Adding another linking word such as *unless* or *because* and another blank sometimes provokes amusement and occasional reflection If a student originally wrote, *Love is Michele* he may now write

Love is Michele unless she moves away. If the student adds to this statement an explanation of why he feels this way, aims it at an audience and chooses a voice he could have the beginning of a paper that might intrigue him and his reader (especially Michele). The exercise then can be little more than a semantic game if teacher and students wish to keep it at that level. But writing is an additive process just as it is a substantiating and qualifying one, and this exercise can be expanded to add as it substantiates through detail as it qualifies its original assertion.

The composing process is never over. Ultimately students are likely to discover what professionals already know: that the art of writing is really the art of constant rewriting. Students frequently assume that rewriting begins at the conclusion of a first draft, but writers know better and students soon learn better. Rewriting is likely to begin with the first word or sentence as the writer wonders if a better word or a better way of structuring the sentence isn't available. Rewriting is an ongoing process that cannot wait until the paper is ended.

How does the teacher involve students in the act of rewriting? By showing them his own writing and his writing on top of that writing. By proving that a writer is not easily satisfied. By discussing sample student papers showing where, in his opinion, the student might have tried another word, another way of saying something more effectively. But above all, by providing ample opportunities for writing about things students care about. Rewriting is hard work and most of us are willing to work hard only on something we care about.

**WRITING AND TALKING** Some students may confuse speaking and writing, complimenting a teacher's or a student's writing by saying, "That sounds just like you just like the way you talk." But is the written word precisely the same as the spoken one? Should it be? Although a writer may approximate his speech, usually what the reader means is that the writer sounds like a human being who cares about his subject and his audience. In effect, the writer has presented an authentic voice. He has something to say so important that he is willing to involve the reader and to make that reader care just as much as he does. Whatever the formal form of writing (narrative, descriptive, or expository), the writing is persuasive; the writer has persuaded the reader that there is an honest and authentic human voice behind those words.

Do people write as they talk? No, nor should they. What they should do is say interesting things clearly and freshly without all the normal obfuscations and delays and repetitions of speech. Any one who has edited a tape-recorded talk or panel for publication knows how frustrating it is to translate the excitement of a time

and place and audience into written prose. What is typical of speech? Redundancies, there partly to reinforce or remind an audience of a point partly to rephrase a point obviously not yet clear. Stalls and delays, the common but unnoticed "uhs." Emphasis achieved by raising lowering or slowing the voice for a second. More attention to enunciation and pronunciation. What is typical of writing? No attention to enunciation or pronunciation but close attention to mechanics. Little repetition, since the reader can refer to previous sentences or paragraphs. Worry about organization, since structural faults will be obvious to the reader. No possibility of the immediate feedback that forces the author to reveal his purpose and be immediately clear. Essentially, the major difference between speaking and writing is that writing can be rewritten, tightened, and polished remedies denied in speaking.

**SEARCHING FOR CLARITY AND TRUTH RHETORIC** Although it has a long heritage and a lengthy bibliography, the term rhetoric is a relatively recent addition to the lexicons of many English teachers. Aristotle defined rhetoric 'as the faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion.'<sup>10</sup> In classical rhetoric often used synonymously with Aristotelian rhetoric the speaker or writer was urged to discover relationships and find arguments (*inventio*), to arrange those arguments carefully (*dispositio*) and to find the most effective style and diction for them (*elocutio*).

The term modern rhetoric is likely to be more familiar to teachers. Even though an occasional English teacher sometimes misunderstands rhetoric and believes it to be nothing more than a synonym for composition, most teachers recognize that it has happily reemphasized the duty of the writer to both his purpose and his audience. Modern rhetoric has led many teachers to rethink and refocus their composition program.

**DISCOVERING A SUBJECT INVENTION** For any writer but especially the neophyte, the first and most frustrating state of writing is finding a subject and discovering ways to approach and explore it—in essence to find a handle. Students quite rightfully object to being told by a teacher 'Write 500 words on anything you want but have it in on Friday.' Being asked to write on anything is less than no help. Even with a specific subject carefully tailored to the particular class students may easily feel that they have little to say and nothing to write.

<sup>10</sup> *The Rhetoric of Aristotle* trans. Lane Cooper (New York: Appleton Century Crofts 1932) p. 7.

The teacher's job is like that of classical rhetoricians who were concerned with discovering relationships and evolving arguments to support a point of view.<sup>11</sup> He must help students discover an approach to a subject without pretending that it is the only one. Part of that responsibility will be met if the teacher carefully chooses literature, films, and other materials with his students' interests and needs in mind, for these are likely to be the source material for most composition work.

Although a subject can be discovered in the process of composition, a teacher can help his students by suggesting ways to limit the subject and some alternate ways to discover it. One simple method is to list obvious topics on the blackboard or a transparency and to discuss their breadth and blandness and the need to narrow or focus them. Taking a subject like football and narrowing it to the football team to I'm on the football team to sometimes I get nervous playing football may seem an empty exercise until the teacher asks students to take a narrowed subject and focus it by making an assertion, a statement of commitment such as Kickoff time always makes me nervous. This sentence could be a good first sentence (or concluding one) for a student's paper. At least it is a sentence which makes the writer choose specific ideas, details, and feelings.

Much of the discovery or invention stage of writing takes place in discussion. As students argue about the pessimism in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* or the claim of nineteen-year-old Sammy in John Updike's *A & P* that it seems to me that once you begin a gesture it's fatal not to go through with it, or the implied attack on education in Yevtushenko's *Lies*, the teacher and students are presented with ample opportunities to explore ideas and feelings and to discover arguments. If the discussion is spirited and the class in disagreement, there may be reason to write.

Much of what some teachers call prewriting is identical to discovery and invention. Of the three relatively distinct parts of the composing process—prewriting, writing, and rewriting—prewriting or discovering ideas, feelings, and arguments will take by far the largest share of time. Therefore, the teacher needs to devote more class time to it, allowing students ample opportunity to think about a subject and encouraging discussion of the many ways any subject can be viewed or approached.

11 See Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford, 1965), pp. 34-272 for a detailed discussion of invention and a list of topics devised by Aristotle. Richard Larson's "Discovery Through Questioning: A Plan for Teaching Rhetorical Invention," *College English* 30 (Nov. 1968): 126-34, also develops an impressive range of topics, all phrased as questions.

**CHOOSING AN AUTHENTIC VOICE** Because rhetoric stresses the writer and his voice, it has had a salutary effect on many English classes Bruce Lockerbie notes

The rhetorical approach to composition stresses the living aspect of the written work. Instead of seeing only ranks of sentences and phalanxes of paragraphs, we hear a speaker. Instead of seeing only grammatical relationships and logical patterns, we hear a distinct tonal inflection. Instead of seeing only words on paper, we imagine an exchange of language between two persons—a dialogue between a speaker and his audience concerning a certain subject. These are the elements of rhetoric so enumerated by Aristotle, they comprise the "rhetorical situation" or the "dramatic framework" in a piece of writing.

From the rhetorical consideration, the essential questions regarding any piece of writing are these: "Who's speaking? To whom? About what?" These questions require of the reader a certain imaginative flair, a gift for childlike pretense, for the reader must infer from the text before him a real, live, flesh-and-blood human being, the reader must reason inductively the nature of that speaker's intended audience, the reader must also identify the subject of the speaker's discourse to that audience.<sup>12</sup>

No writing has value unless the writer says something he cares about to someone who might wish to listen. Presumably, the obligation to say something worth saying and hearing carries with it the obligation to tell the truth so far as possible and the additional responsibility to find the best examples and arguments possible, to organize ideas so they arouse or interest an intended audience, and to find the best and most persuasive way to word an idea so that it maintains the interest of the audience. To bring this about, the writer must decide precisely what voice he will use.

To illustrate voice, a teacher may give a simple example using several possible ones. If a student has fifty cents less than the money he needs for a snack, ball game, or a show, he might consider borrowing from a number of people: his kid sister, his mother, his father, his best friend, his English teacher, or a co-worker at his part-time job. However, he would almost certainly use a different voice for each. Even in this trivial example the students can see that communication to a specific audience demands careful consideration of the voice used.

12 D. Bruce Lockerbie, "The Speaking Voice Approach Joins the Rhetoric Parade," *English Journal* 56 (Mar. 1967): 411-12. Lockerbie's article is an excellent introduction to the use of modern rhetoric in the classroom. Three books for the teacher interested in rhetorical theory and classroom application are: Robert M. Gorrell, ed., *Rhetoric Theories for Application* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1967); Marilyn Steinmann, ed., *New Rhetorics* (New York: Scribner's, 1967); and W. Ross Winterrowd, *Rhetoric: A Synthesis* (New York: Holt, 1968).

The following paper could be used as the basis of a discussion of what happens when a writer fails to write in a voice interesting to his audience

### MY JOB

At 4 30 A M it's time to get up for work I've got to get dressed wash my face brush my teeth and eat At 6 00 A M I'm working in my own office at the \_\_\_\_\_ Construction Company

My job is to weigh trucks hauling crushed stone out of the quarry to the new interstate highway and to write tickets giving the weight tare and gross weight

The tare weight is the weight of the truck when it's empty the net weight is the weight of the load and the gross weight is the combination of the tare and net weight

There are three different types of trucks to weigh They are the straight the tandem and the semi truck The straight truck has a tare weight of about 8 500 lbs and can gross about 19 000 lbs The tandem truck usually weighs about 20 800 lbs empty and can gross about 58 000 lbs

Each truck has to be weighed and a separate ticket written The machine used to write the tickets is a new Uarco For each single ticket I write four other copies at the same time The last four tickets are carbon copies One goes to the Iowa State Highway Commission and the other four tickets go to the producer Concrete Materials

The scales have to be balanced at least twice a day When balancing the scales you have to push all the weight bars to the far end of the scales so that there is no weight given at all You then turn a large screw around clockwise to make them heavier When the tongue of the scales balances perfectly I can begin weighing trucks

At noon each day each truck has to be reweighed for a new tare weight and a new chart containing the truck numbers and tare weight has to be made

When 6 00 comes the scale machine is unloaded and the three carbon copies and the originals are turned over to the timekeeper who totals the new weights and turns the tickets over to the Concrete Materials until the next day's haul begins

After reading the paper the class might explore what voices would be possible to describe a summer job If a student were enthusiastic he would select details to convince his audience that the job was not just another summer job and he might use a voice similar to that of a neophyte awed and terrified and impressed by all the old hands doing their work easily He might wish to stress the boredom of the job Then he would assume the voice of an old timer ten weeks into the job confident of himself and out to prove that the only virtue in the job is the pay

To prove that writers especially nonprofessional writers worry about a voice and an audience the teacher might bring in several letters to the editor from recent newspapers. The letter reprinted below reveals voice arguments and examples and organization aimed at a particular audience. Students may wish to dispute the tone or voice some arguing that the writer is being sarcastic others that he is sincere others that he is being straightforward.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Let Us Taxpayers At That Wilderness!

To the Editor of The Gazette

I'm with \_\_\_\_\_ 100 percent in his argument (Oct 7 letter "Why Lock Up Area For Only The Few?") that the Sycamore Canyon and Pine Mountain areas should be kept open for everybody even the owners of four wheel drive vehicles and not just for those effete snobs who can afford long and expensive back pack vacations.

This country was made great by Americans opening up the wilderness areas and it is my belief that the Almighty intended that man should rise to the challenge and to overcome the desolation and the uselessness of places like the aforementioned. It is what wilderness is for.

I myself have a war surplus Army tank which I have spent a great deal of money and spare time rebuilding and it is getting to where there are few places where I can run it on my weekends. It has a 1450 hp aircraft type engine with open exhausts and it really makes the woods ring when I get it to working out through brush and trees and over hills. I defy any of those short pants bird watchers or long hairs to tell me that my tax dollars don't entitle me to just as much use of wilderness areas as they think they are entitled to.

And another thing. My elderly father is now confined to a wheelchair after a long work life spent in manufacturing special varmint killing devices like cyanide shooting guns and spring traps. By way of helping to keep smog down he has the wheelchair powered by an electric motor. After all my father did to help rid this country of the predatory livestock killers (sheep and deer killers too) he should certainly now in his retirement years be allowed to go out and visit some of the wilderness that he helped make safe for these conservation freaks.

Why can't special blacktop paths be built with our tax dollars out into wilderness areas like the Superstitions and the Mazatzals etc. so that crippled people (especially the aged) can enjoy these places too? Maybe it would be a good idea to take some of those long hair dope smokers and put them to work making such access trails in order to work out their jail sentences.<sup>13</sup>

The teacher might ask a class what voice they would use in responding to this letter a direct analytical one trying to be objective and avoiding emotionalism a sarcastic one pointing out every illogical comment in the letter or a satirical voice There is an infinity open to students subject only to the imagination of the teacher and the students discussing a response

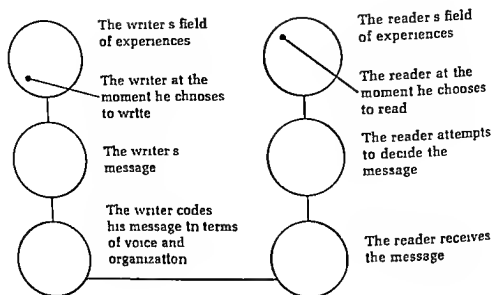
**PERSUADING THE AUDIENCE** Students might be surprised to discover that all writing is basically persuasive in intent Obviously argumentative writing is persuasive but so are other forms Narrative prose attempts to persuade the reader that the events really did happen as the writer claims Descriptive prose tries to show that something really did look a particular way at a moment frozen in time Reflective or personal writing (at least that meant to be seen by others) attempts to persuade the reader that the writer's feeling reaction or belief is worth considering maybe even worth accepting Students may object to the idea that others are constantly manipulating (or attempting to manipulate) them saying it is too cynical but they should be aware that others are trying to persuade them to act or believe or feel differently The teacher needs to make students alert to persuasive tricks in newspaper editorials letters to the editor television newscasts advertising or anything else The teacher must also alert students to the ways they are being manipulated by literature or writing or speech This is one of his most important responsibilities maybe the most important Learning about manipulation from many different examples will make students more aware of the concomitant duties and dangers of all forms of communication The aim of writing should be persuasive truth but one man's doubt is another man's dogma

If a teacher has a definite responsibility to help his students understand the persuasive power of communication and the importance of carefully choosing a voice students also have definite responsibilities to themselves and their readers They must select a topic and limit it to their experience and knowledge they must select a voice which they believe in they must care enough about their topic to attempt to convey their enthusiasm or understanding and they must remember their audience Students will feel these responsibilities if their teacher's deep personal commitment to truth reaches them through his teaching his writing and the opportunities he presents for writing freely and honestly

Sometimes the communication model in Figure 5.1 or one similar to it can help students understand the responsibilities and dangers in any kind of communication This model reveals the number of places where interference or static can exist and the complexity of any communication



FIGURE 5 1



**ASSIGNING OR GENERATING WRITING** Motivation may be the most overused word in the educational jargon. It is also the key word in writing instruction. Without some reason to write, most students will produce the English. English teachers so richly deserve. The question so many students ask, "Why do we have to write about \_\_\_\_?" is not necessarily a dumb or pointless question. The teacher should be able to discuss quietly and intelligently the reason for any writing, although he need not be disturbed if some of his students do not share his enthusiasm for the subject.

**ASSIGNING WRITING** What is a good assignment in composition? Edmund J. Farrell cites seven kinds of composition assignments to avoid:

1. Avoid assignments that can be answered yes no true false
2. Avoid assignments that lead to short often fragmentary responses
3. Avoid assignments that lead to idle speculation or that may be treated frivolously
4. Avoid assignments which are vague or which assume knowledge students may not possess
5. Avoid assignments which by posing numerous questions provoke incoherency
6. Avoid assignments which a student may regard as too personal

- 7 Avoid assignments which pit a novice writer against a professional<sup>14</sup>

There are at least eight hallmarks of a good composition assignment

- 1 A good composition assignment should excite students and should challenge them to say something that matters to them and to the reader. Although it should engage the student in a controversy, a quest for an answer or some accurate observation, its primary value is that it will engage the student in something worthwhile to him.
- 2 A good composition assignment should be related to ideas and materials being used at that time. Whether the class is reading a short story or studying dialects or viewing films, the composition topic should ordinarily relate directly to the work of the class. Spontaneous topics do arise in discussions and these may be the subjects for writing, too, but they ought to be exceptions rather than the rule. Spontaneity is a virtue, but it ought not to be confused with poor preparation. A good teacher plans carefully and hopes that the spontaneous happens.
- 3 A good composition assignment should be related to the knowledge and experience of the students, assuming neither too much nor too little and containing sufficient complexity and difficulty to challenge students in a particular class at a particular time. A teacher will need to supply specific help and ammunition to get students going, to keep them going, and to help them conclude their work.
- 4 A good composition assignment will lead students to look spontaneously for a purpose and an appropriate audience, voice and style. Specific class problems in writing may need attention, whether related to spelling, for instance, or using examples. Individual student writing problems must be worked out individually. Almost no teaching practice is more time-consuming or time-wasting than teaching and reteaching something to the entire class that all but one or two know already.
- 5 A good composition assignment should frequently focus on one writing skill, and teaching that skill should precede student writing. The skill should be particularly useful to the topic, and the teacher, reacting to and evaluating the papers, should pay particular attention to it. The skill emphasized should be predicated on the teacher's awareness of the rhetorical needs of his

<sup>14</sup> Edmund J. Farrell, "The Beginning Begs: Making Composition Assignments," *English Journal* 58 (Mar. 1969): 479-30.

students, not on some textbook's notion of what students need and the order of those needs, nor on a curriculum guide clearly designed for the many, not the particular

- 6 A good composition assignment allows students to experiment and play with language Teachers can suggest some possible voices students might consider using or different audiences to seek but at all times, the teacher should suggest, not dictate Sometimes, a teacher may wish to assign a paper specifically aimed at a class problem If, for instance, too many students are using too many clichés too much of the time, he may also wish to write a paragraph like the following to give students an idea of the problem

Any port in a storm was better than nothing and what a port she was to me! I had always been known as an artful deceiver but she made me feel like a fish out of water Falling head over heels in love had always seemed a fate worse than death to me Call it crass stupidity or the selling of my soul I found I began to come at her beck and call Beyond a shadow of a doubt I was true blue to her, and every Tom Dick and Harry ate their hearts out I promised to remain with her through thick and thin In her youth she was the apple of my eye always took my breath away at first sight of her, and I blessed my lucky stars to have her But, as time with his sickle cut away the years and added on the pounds my pledge of love through thick or thin was quite a cross to bear

Whether the following assignment, accompanied by a discussion of the teacher-written paragraph above, would eliminate all or even most student clichés is problematical, but it will likely increase student awareness of the device and make them more aware of their own use of it

Using the following phrases in the order listed below create a story

Between you and me and the bedpost  
 abject terror  
 blood curdling yell  
 death's door  
 far from the madding crowd  
 bed of roses  
 head or tail of  
 beginning of the end  
 bundle of nerves  
 bit off more than I could chew  
 be that as it may  
 devil incarnate  
 axe to grind

act in cold blood  
 one fell swoop  
 feet of clay  
 safe and sound  
 alive and kicking  
 all things considered<sup>15</sup>

- 7 A good composition assignment should frequently (if not regularly) be followed by demonstration writing. To do this the class can discuss a paper and organize it on the blackboard or on a transparency examining possible ways of writing or some writing problems that may occur and their solutions. The class can also discuss the good and bad points of a student paper written in another class on roughly the same topic. Professional writing works well as a stimulus to student writing but using any professional writer as a model defeats students instead of encouraging them. A teacher who asks students to imitate James Thurber or E. B. White or John Updike asks for the impossible. Using student writing as an example may give other students hope that they might learn eventually how to write.
- 8 To evolve a good composition assignment the teacher should write it himself first. While that process may be too onerous for every assignment the teacher who forces himself to write the kind of paper students will write later may discover problems likely to ensue and be able to discuss them in class before the assignment or may discover techniques or skills that must be taught before the papers are completed. If the teacher writes and circulates to his students several of his own assignments he may gain considerable respect from them by proving his ability to handle what he asks of them: his own fallibility and his humanity. The teacher himself might even gain self respect. One fairly old technique for evaluating students' writing is to ditto several of their papers for use as a basis for class discussion. As a variation the teacher might include his own paper in the group.

**GENERATING WRITING** Ideally a teacher should try to generate topics for writing from class discussion: whether that discussion concerns language history, something bothering students right then, or a short story, poem, or novel. Short stories like Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* can provide discussion topics such as: Why do men follow traditions instead of questioning them? or Why do we all need scapegoats? or Why does the story present characters that are so flat and stereotyped when a good short story is supposed to

<sup>15</sup> Idea and assignment by Ms. Lynne Brown

have developed characterization? ' If one of these questions—or any other question—provokes genuine and spirited discussion, the teacher could stop, just when students are anxious to keep going, and ask them to write. Obviously, the teacher's problem is to get the discussion going and to know the moment when students have not said too much or too little. He should also be wary of overusing the technique. Recently, a student was overheard to say, "Don't talk too much in this class. If you talk and act interested, we'll have to write a theme." Spontaneity is essential for good discussion, but spontaneity will happen less and less frequently if every discussion exists only as a source of writing topics.

Frequently, a teacher may wish to suggest several writing topics, perhaps graduated in difficulty, perhaps aimed at specific students' interests, or perhaps designed to show students the several facets open to them. If some students discover a topic not listed by the teacher but of greater interest to them, why not let them write on that? Personal involvement with a writing assignment is rare enough that the teacher ought to show his delight when it comes his way.

Writing topics come from anyplace and everyplace, wherever the class is and wherever they would like to be. Literature probably provides more possibilities than any other single source. Relationships between personal experiences and literature are a rich source of composition topics. Reactions to current issues, values maintained or attacked, abstractions related to specific student problems, and vocational interests are others. Language study is less often used, but potentially it contains a multiplicity of topics that can be evolved from observations of usage, dialect, local locutions, and semantic dilemmas. Mass media provide opportunities to explore differences and similarities in television programs, magazines, films, or to evolve critical standards.

In *Writing to Be Read*, Ken Macrone recommends that students observe their worlds for 'fabulous realities'—those surprising and often amusing statements we hear, signs we read, or incidents we view that are almost right and normal but not quite. Sometimes they are nothing more than the ambiguities injected by a reporter who has nodded over a dull story.

Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ poured coffee in her fur coat

From letters to the lovelorn: I really love her, but just can't get that letter out of my system. You see, she is very beautiful and 22 years old. So am I.

From headlines: Policemen ordered to stop drinking in park.

Realtors at symposium to have film for lunch.

From an ad: Young girl desires thorough weekly cleaning—experienced.

Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ testified she carried the knife that killed Smith in her bra.

A UN delegate speaking to delegates from Israel and the United Arab Republic Gentlemen Gentlemen Let us be more Christian in our comments

Sometimes, "fabulous realities" are posted for public display

Sign above a bakery Try our cakes—none like them  
 Sign on bridge during World War II In case of bombing attack drive directly off the bridge  
 Sign above a furniture store We lose \$10 00 on every sale—But we make it up because of our tremendous volume  
 Sign in a florist's window If you don't like flowers now, they will grow on you in the end  
 Sign in clothing store Bridal gowns for all occasions  
 Sign at a farm Cow for sale—Contains chlorophyll

Sometimes they are incidents or things seen in an otherwise normal day

A young man thumbing a ride from Phoenix to Boston waves a sign, 'Go West Young Man'

Another young woman hitchhiker wears only a halter and a man's pajama pants

A textbook illustration of Washington Irving's headless horseman has the horse's head neatly cut out and a sign beneath it 'Now the headless horseman rides a headless horse'

An envelope containing advertising for a set of books arrives in the mail the name and address of the person receiving it gummed on a label Under the label the message begins We apologize if your name is missing from the label above

A teacher grants a student permission to leave the school early if the student first gets permission from the principal's office The student finds that the secretary to the principal will not give permission unless the student has already secured the teacher's permission The student returns to class to discover the stubborn teacher will not give his permission first

Teachers should clip out fabulous realities to use as composition topics or to provoke composition discussion The following true stories of unique attempted robberies might make students more aware of the wonders and surprises around them

#### WOMAN'S TEARS TURN BANDIT SOFT

Columbus, Ohio (UPI)

Karen Voltz, 27, had just returned to her car in an underground parking garage in downtown Columbus after doing some Christmas shopping when a man walked up jerked open her car door, pointed a gun at her and demanded money

When she began crying, the bandit asked her if she was all right, cautioned her, "Next time keep your door locked," wished her a Merry Christmas, and walked away (December 21, 1972)

### ROBBERS SNATCH BAGFUL OF LOOT

Cincinnati, Ohio (AP)

Albert Lewis was walking to work at the Gibson Greeting Cards Co when two men in an expensive late-model car pulled onto a driveway ahead of him

"Give us the paper bag," one man said, pulling a gun and nodding at the bag Lewis carried

Lewis told the men what was inside

"Give us the bag," the man insisted Lewis complied

The men made their getaway with some work clothes and a ham sandwich (May 10, 1972)

### ROB BANK? HE'D RATHER STEAL IT!

Huntington Beach, Calif (UPI)

Police are holding Richard John Lee on a charge of trying, not to rob a bank, but to steal one

Police said Lee broke into a motor home used as a mobile branch of the Bank of America and tried to make off with it He managed to start the engine, couldn't get the vehicle in gear, police said, so he asked for help from two service station attendants

The fact that the motor home had "Bank of America" painted on it in big letters and it was the wee hours of the morning, "aroused their suspicions," police said, and the mechanics called the officers who collared Lee (January 30, 1973)

### THIS CASE IS SOLVED

Philadelphia (AP)

This guy handed this note to the bank teller which read "Play it cool Put \$20 000 in bag I have a 25-hour bomb P S 9 seconds left"

Teller Ann Camper fell to the floor screaming, and the robber fled with nothing

He even left behind the note, which was a serious error because it was printed on the back of a telephone bill that contained a name, address and telephone number

Two hours later Clarence DeLoatch, 25, was arrested at his home

"We don't get many notes from holdup men with return addresses," said Detective Capt Thomas O Neill (December 22, 1972)

### BOYS' ROBBERY ATTEMPT IS ONE FOR THE BOOKS

Buffalo, Okla (UPI)

The only explanation police have is that the two teen age robbers must have gotten the bank mixed up with the library

"It's the first attempted library robbery I ever heard of," policeman Ray Dawson said yesterday

Dawson said the teen-agers held out an empty pillow case and told the library attendant "Put it in"

"Put what in?" the attendant asked

"The money Put it in and nobody'll get hurt," the youths demanded

The attendant, who said there was less than \$1 in collected library fines in his petty cash box, ran out the door and escaped. The teen-agers, believed to be runaways from Florida, were arrested hours later in Garden City, Kan.

The town's library and bank are a block apart on corner locations, and the exterior of the bank is partially obstructed because of scaffolding used in remodeling.

"It would be easy to go in the wrong door, thinking you were in the bank," Dawson said (February 23, 1973)

### WOMAN TELLER TALKS HER WAY OUT OF ROBBERY

Buffalo, N.Y. (UPI)

A frustrated bank robber walked out of a branch of the Marine Midland Bank-Western empty-handed after a teller gave him an impromptu lesson in how to rob a bank.

The robber had gone up to the teller, who was not identified, and asked for money.

"We don't give money away here," the woman teller replied. When the man told her it was a robbery, she asked, "Where's your note?"

The would-be robber promptly scribbled a note demanding the money and handed it over the counter.

Unimpressed, the teller then asked, "So where's your gun?"

"You're crazy," the bandit muttered. He turned and left (February 11, 1973)

### WHO SAID POLITENESS DOESN'T PAY

New York (UPI)

A bandit, apparently armed with nothing more than a polite disposition, robbed a branch of the First National City Bank of about \$2,500 yesterday.

The man waited patiently in line and when his turn came he asked the female teller, "Could I ask you a question?" police said.

The teller replied "Yes," and the bandit asked, "Could I have all your 100s, 50s and 10s?"

He fled after she gave him the money.

A policeman, who said the man apparently had no weapon, said "He was very polite, just asked her for the money and that was it" (August 30, 1972)



## EVALUATING A MONOLOGUE OR A DIALOGUE

Almost nothing in the teacher's professional life takes more time to less purpose than evaluating student writing. Students fear and hate it, teachers dread it. For the teacher, evaluation is certain to be time consuming yet it is uncertain that students will read the teacher's marks or words or, if they do read them, that they will be helped. To many students, the process the teacher uses in evaluating their work borders on the mystical, mostly because too few teachers demonstrate their grading principles. Students are often irritated by teachers' inability to answer much less explore, two good questions "How are grades given?" and "Why are they given at all?"

What is the purpose of evaluating student writing? The only sound or sensible answer any teacher can give is that it helps students. So why do students continue to question the purpose of teacher evaluation? Because too many teachers do things to student writing which are not merely unhelpful but damaging to the students and to the writing program.

Nearly twenty years ago, the *Illinois English Bulletin* devoted an entire issue to some recommendations for teaching composition. One especially valuable section illustrated four different ways of marking a student paper: marking to assign a grade, marking to indicate faults, marking to correct (or editing to please the teacher), and marking to teach writing and thinking (pages 149-152).<sup>16</sup>

Marking to assign a grade (Figure 5-2) is easy for the teacher and worthless to the student, offering him no help in his next effort. In fact, the student is likely to feel that no one really read his paper, and receiving a few papers marked in this way will certainly make the student totally indifferent to writing. The teacher who inherits this student next year is not so likely to have a student frozen with fear as one who sees no point in writing for this method of marking makes grading an exercise in superficial proofreading, nothing more. The writing becomes busywork activity, not a method fostering growth in the composing process.

Marking to indicate faults (Figure 5-3) is almost certain to freeze students. Already convinced that they're likely to make errors and certain they were not cut out to be writers, students will take one look at their papers and say, "told you so." They're right. Marking this way, seeing only faults and no virtues, will discourage most students, help none, and, used repeatedly, it will kill any lingering interest in writing a student has. Who likes to be evaluated by a robot, particularly a robot who deals only in abbreviations. Additionally

16 William J. Dusel, determining an efficient teaching load in English, *Illinois English Bulletin* 43 (Oct. 1955). The four methods of marking papers quoted are on pages 6, 8, 10, and 12.

## FIGURE 5-2 Marking to Assign a Grade

## 'One Hectic Day

To start this out, I guess I had better back up a little. Last week end, some friends, my parents, one of my girlfriends and I, went up to the snow. My parents decided that instesd of trying to battle the traffic on the way home Sunday we would leave early Monday morning and be home by 11 o'clock. So we got up at six in the morning so we could have breakfast before leaving. We finally got away at 7:15 and hadn't been gone over an hour when I noticed there was quite a bit of blue smoke coming out of the tail pipe. I mentioned it to my Dad, but he just kept on driving. We passed a Gas Station but he wouldn't stop, so about ten minutes later the car started missing and more exhaust came out of the tail pipe. Then Dad decided to stop. When he stopped and put the hood up the smoke was so bad that you would have thought there was a minitura <sup>SP</sup> bonfire there in the motor.

My Dad just stood there for a few minutes and shook his head. None of us were intrasted in saying I told you so. Then he waved a passing car down and asked them if they would mind, when going into the first town, to get us a tow truck as we were having trouble with our car. They said, No, they wouldn't mind, so off they went.

There we sat, out in the desolate <sup>SP</sup> country with nothing around us but fields, with a few scattered cows and chirping birds in the trees.

In about an hour we saw a big tow truck coming down the

FIGURE 5-3 Marking to Indicate Faults

C

One Hectic Day

Weak opening sentence

rep p. d. P

awk d. d. cap. caps WW WW P sp. d. cap. agr p ref awk P. dir gart

SP

undveloped Paragraph

To start this out, I guess I had better back up a little. Last week end, some friends, my parents, one of my girlfriends, and I, went up to the snow. My parents decided that instead of trying to battle the traffic on the way home Sunday we would leave early Monday morning and be home by 11 o'clock. So we got up at six in the morning so we could have breakfast before leaving. We finally got away at 7:15 and hadn't been gone over an hour when I noticed there was quite a bit of blue smoke coming out of the tail pipe. I mentioned it to my Dad but he just kept on driving. We passed a Gas Station but he wouldn't stop, so about ten minutes later the car started missing and more exhaust came out of the tail pipe. Then Dad decided to stop. When he stopped and put the hood up the smoke was so bad that you would have thought there was a miniature bonfire there in the motor. My Dad just stood there for a few minutes and shook his head. None of us were intrested in saying I told you so. Then he waved a passing car down and asked them if they would mind, when going into the first town, to get us a tow truck as we were having trouble with our car. They said, "No, they wouldn't mind, an off they went. There we sat, out in the desolate country with nothing around us but fields, with a few scattered cows and chirping birds in the trees. In about an hour we saw a big tow truck coming down the

FIGURE 5-4 Marking to Correct

One Electric Day

*Recopy this and turn it in on Friday*

~~the car~~ ~~this~~ ~~one~~ ~~goes~~ ~~I~~ ~~had~~ ~~better~~ ~~back~~ ~~up~~ ~~a~~

little Last week and some friends, my parents, one of my girlfriends, and I went up to the snow. We all enjoyed ourselves. My parents thoroughly enjoyed it. We started home.

~~decided that instead of trying to battle the traffic on the way home~~ Sunday we would leave early Monday morning. Then things began to happen.

and be home by 11 o'clock. We got up at six, had a quick breakfast, and started for home. We finally got away. This had not been gone over an hour when I noticed a stream of blue smoke coming out of the exhaust pipe of the car. I mentioned it to my Dad, but he just kept on driving. We passed a gas station, but he wouldn't stop. About ten minutes later the car started missing and more smoke poured out of the tail pipe. Only did then, Dad decided to stop. When he stopped, he put the hood up, and the smoke poured out as if it was a miniature bonfire in the motor.

My Dad just stood there for a few minutes and shook his head. None of us was interested in saying, "I told you so." Then he waved the passing car down and asked the driver if he would mind, when going into the first town, getting us a tow truck, as we were having trouble with our car. The driver said, "No, I wouldn't mind," so off he went.

There we sat out in the desolate country, with nothing around us but a few distant cows in the fields and occasional flying bugs.

In about an hour we saw a big tow truck coming down the

a teacher who scrutinizes a paper in this manner loses all contact with what the student is trying to say the distraction (or attraction) of error hunting blinding the teacher to the writer's message

Marking to correct (Figure 5-4) establishes the teacher's brilliance as editor and leaves students with no helpful hints or suggestions. Through overkill the teacher has told what is wrong (though much that is changed might not have been and all changes reflect the teacher's view not the author's) but the student who might like to learn has no way of knowing why his draft was wrong or why the teacher's draft is right.

The teacher employing the fourth method marking to teach writing and thinking (Figure 5-5) marks a few mechanical problems but transforms most of his comments into questions meant to begin a dialogue between the writer and the reader. This teacher obviously has read with interest and his interest is most clearly demonstrated by reactions that might help a student both in revising and in writing future papers.

**GRADING AND CORRECTING PAPERS** What should the teacher avoid in evaluating papers? He might begin by avoiding the words grading and correcting and their implications and associations. Grading suggests a Calvinistic writing program designed to determine the elect and the damned with the English teacher balancing the scales. Correcting puts the teacher at the center of the writing program the final authority on all rhetorical matters. Professional writers know that no final authority exists. Only a bad English teacher who had to justify his job by establishing his superiority to students would voluntarily use the word correct without smiling.

Using red ink or marking only for faults should be avoided. Red ink has evil connotations for students. Faultfinding is an easy cop out. Problems in mechanics need not be ignored but they can be viewed in perspective. Twenty spelling errors may be cause for concern but not if the same word is misspelled twenty times. Misspelling very common words such as *its* *its* *your* *you're* and *their* *there* is indeed common in school and in life but simple admonition does little for the students however much it may placate the conscience of the teacher. Mechanical errors are important if they obfuscate ideas or the impression the writer is trying to make. Pretending to students that mechanical errors are as important as content tone diction audience or organization does much to discredit the teacher.<sup>17</sup>

17 Several years ago a young and energetic English teacher remonstrated another saying that kids get by too easily today. You ought to mark every error on every paper till they learn how to write. Later however he became incensed by a college professor who disputed his point, and the deadly serious

Using split grades for content and mechanics (A/B or C+/C— as in the fourth method of marking a paper) suggests that the two grades are equal. But content and mechanics are not equal. Mechanical errors are serious enough to confuse the reader, hurt the content. And where are grades for voice or organization or style or diction or any other facet of writing? Carried to its logical extreme, the split grade might be justifiable if it looked something like this:

C/B—/A—/C+/B/B/B+/A/B—/

**EVALUATING AS A MONOLOGUE** Just as overstressing the wrong things can frighten a student, comments which have no meaning or meaning known only to the initiated can bewilder and provide no help. Using symbols—sp, frag, awk, K, R O, C S, SS, ww, or dic—and little more may speed the work of teachers. It does nothing for students. Likewise, writing enigmatic comments like Oh? or Huh! or Odd! or So? reveals more about the cynicism of a teacher than it does about his willingness to help students. Writing comments which sound helpful but are wonderfully vague is another art form some teachers have developed. The following comments could be written on almost any paper, and nearly every student would find them equally applicable and equally useless:

Interesting, but weren't there quite a few errors?

Often relevant, but aren't some of your sentences a little awkward?

Viable, but couldn't you think of some better examples?

Meaningful, but was it long enough to make your point?

Potentially a sound paper, but did you always keep your audience in mind?

Sometimes provocative, but some words struck me as ineffective.

Basically, these comments and the first three methods of marking papers mentioned previously are all variations on a monologue, by definition, one-sided. Students already hear enough of these at home or from other teachers. For the English teacher who supposedly believes in imagination and creativity and learning to give yet another series of monologues is unforgivable.

**EVALUATING AS A DIALOGUE** What might help students and encourage them to try again? Above everything else, the teacher

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young puritan rapidly typed out the following note and tacked it on the professor's door:

I disagree with you because a paper should be graded for every error one can see. I like the idea of scanning the first paper, but the first paper must point out all the errors. There are better ways to test for understanding than giving a theme.

should find as many things right and good as he possibly can about every paper seeking a proportion of at least three virtues for every defect or problem. If a teacher wants to help students learn something about writing he should concentrate on no more than one or two problems per paper. Improving in everything simultaneously is impossible, a fact that students know. Therefore if his paper has many adverse comments he will either get angry or give up, benefiting neither himself, the teacher, nor the learning process. Students can accept their writing limitations and they might be willing to try to do something about them, but not about thirty-two of them at once.

The aim of evaluating student writing like the aim of any legitimate criticism should be to help the writer to suggest strengths and weaknesses and to carry on a dialogue where teacher and student can both contribute, can speak and listen, can write and think and share frustrations and problems, and can offer help and respect. Carrying on a dialogue is time-consuming, but students might learn something about the composing process in that time-consuming exchange.

In addition to marginal comments, a good teacher will want to write a terminal comment, one summarizing the praiseworthy parts of the paper and suggesting one or two problems with some specific ways of remedying or alleviating them.<sup>18</sup>

**TEACHER VARIABILITY** That teachers disagree on what is good or bad about a paper will come as no shock to teachers, but it often surprises and bewilders students. More frightening yet, teachers' grades can vary widely. Teachers who develop common criteria for evaluation with others often reduce the range of their grading or marking variability, but some variability persists no matter how meticulously a department works to reduce it. More embarrassing yet, a teacher may give a paper an A at one time and later, asked to regrade it, give the same paper a B or a C. A teacher caught in a moment of inconsistency should never bluff or pretend. Inconsistency and uncertainty are sometimes regarded as personality defects, but paradoxically they are inherent to an English teacher's life and job. Right or wrong, a writing problem will seem more important to a teacher at one time than another, and the teacher will always be unsure precisely which problem should be explored with each student at a particular moment.

18. Two most perceptive and helpful articles on writing comments that are specific and useful to students are James L. Green, "A Method for Writing Comments on Student Themes," *English Journal* 57 (Feb. 1968): 215-20, and D. G. Kehl, "The Art of Writing Evaluative Comments on Student Themes," *English Journal* 59 (Oct. 1970): 972-80.

**VARIABILITY IN EVALUATING AND COMMENTING ON FOUR STUDENT PAPERS** The comments on the four papers below, written by tenth graders early in the first semester illustrate the range of teachers' grades and terminal remarks. The topic was

Assume that it's late in August. A friend has been visiting you for the past week and tomorrow he or she leaves. You decide to give your friend one last big day or night. When you begin to suggest some possible activities, you find your friend would prefer to be surprised. You already know that both of you enjoy pretty much the same things. Assume also that money is not an issue. Having made your choice from one of the activities listed below (or any thing else you'd prefer) write about how you'd explain to your friend the choice you made and why you'd hope both of you would enjoy the activity. Give enough details or examples to explain your choice.

(After this fifteen activities were listed but the student was again informed that if he did not like anything on the list he should choose something else he really would like to do.)

#### PAPER ONE

My best friend is in town, Frank, and I thought I would take him on a tour of the University of Iowa campus.

Frank: Do you think he will like that?

I think he will.

He is a senior in high school and is very interested in a college education.

I think he will be interested in Iowa. Because it has a very good course in engineering.

He also is a very good athlete. I would like him to meet some of the coaches and players on the football team.

I thought maybe he would like to go down to the campus early and walk around the grounds and look at some of the buildings and talk to some of the freshmen teachers.

Then in the afternoon we will take in a football game between Iowa and Notre Dame.

Then after the game we will have supper at a restaurant. Then go home and talk and have some coffee and play some recorders.

Then have him get a date and go dancing to a bar and when we get there I am going to have a surprise party with many of his old friends. He will go to school with before they moved to Madison, Wisconsin.

Do you think he will like this, Frank?

Two hundred fourteen full-time English teachers were asked to evaluate this paper to grade it by whatever criteria they would normally use and to write a brief terminal comment or two aimed



at the student and intended to help him. Although the teachers did not know the student (admittedly a problem since helping any writer starts with an awareness of where he is now) their grades and terminal comments may suggest some of the difficulties teachers face when evaluating and many of the frustrations, dilemmas, and horrors students face when they see those comments and grades. The grades given by the 214 teachers ranged from A to F, 3 giving the paper an A, 11 a B, 81 a C, 96 a D, and 23 an F. Representative terminal comments are given below.

Poor paragraphing, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Sentence frag. Incorrect quote usage. Idea good and gives reasons.

You have some good ideas, but you wander too far from the topic. The main idea should be mentioned much earlier.

You cannot punctuate and you have no conception of a paragraph. Your sentence structure and punctuation is bad. You have some very basic problems.

Your idea of using conversation is excellent. Why not choose just one to two reasons and develop them a little more. It's hard to explain here, so come and see me and I'll see if I can help you. What did you think of your paper?

This is very bad in every area of writing, though you do seem able to construct a simple sentence.

I like this. You followed the assignment and you have a lot of things you want to do (they sound like fun, but maybe you're trying to write about too many things). I especially like your way of organizing your ideas, but next time, perhaps I can help you proofread before you show it in class.

You've made a bad choice of audience. Not too well organized. Your dialogue approach is good, and you gave enough details that I know what you're going to do, but I'm not really sure why you're going to do any of them.

I love this. You and your friends are beautiful, and your relationship with Frank is touching. I like what you do.

## PAPER TWO

Jeanne, I've got a wonderful idea about what we could do tomorrow before you leave! I think we should go on a plane tour of Eastern Iowa. Doesn't it sound like fun? Just think of the things we could see. Oh, I've seen some of them before, but never from the air. Have you? We could see the Mississippi River, the State University of Iowa campus, and maybe because it's almost fall, some of the trees are beginning to change color. I doubt it, but it would be fun to see. We might even see some things we didn't know about. You never can tell. What? You've never been in an airplane before! Why you don't know what you've missed! The feeling of sailing through the air like a bird above all of the earth is the most. The view is breathtaking. No, I don't think you'll get sick. You'll be having so

much fun and be so busy trying to see so much of once you won't have the time. Money isn't any problem because it doesn't cost very much and besides we have enough to take care of it. You do! You really want to go? I'm so glad we'll have so much fun. You can always remember your last day here because you'll never forget what you see tomorrow. I'm sure.

Again the range of grades was from A to F with 45 giving an A 115 B 51 C 2 D and 1 F. Their comments:

You have a good narrative style in your writing just as you speak. But sometimes you start one idea before you're finished with the last one.

I like your organization and your technique of the one-sided conversation worked.

Another gushy theme. You need to develop your ideas better and you use too many stale phrases.

You seem to lack any kind of feeling of sincerity. Your usage and grammar is very good.

I like that conversational approach but talking and writing aren't the same and you need to proofread.

You have shown good imagination and some original ideas. But the dialogue isn't really very clear because the reader can't be quite sure who's talking.

I'm glad your friend wanted to go with you. It would have been too bad to have such an enthusiastic and well-organized day fall through, wouldn't it?

I wonder if the theme isn't too limited in appeal because it is directed only towards Jeanne. The reader feels he's listening in on a phone conversation and he's hearing only one side. Can you understand that hearing only one side of a phone call could cause some confusion for the reader? Do you give enough of both sides to make yourself and your ideas clear? One important thing—you need to tighten up your prose mostly by combining sentences. It's complicated and maybe you'd like to talk to me about it. I think I could explain it better and help you if you'd come in when you want to.

You have a good sense of writing techniques.

### PAPER THREE

It was Friday the last day of Ron's visit and I was really in a bind. There was nothing to do. At least nothing that we hadn't already done. Of course there was the Packers-Bears game tonight but with tickets five dollars each that game was out. The only place to get the money with Dad out of town would be from Mom and you know how Mothers are about giving you money to go to football games and the like but still I wanted to give Ron a real good time his last day. After all it can't hurt to ask. If Dad were only home he would give me the money.

Well, I went to Mom and was about to ask her for the money when she asked, 'What are you and Ron going to do today?'

I told her that we were thinking of going to the football game and she seemed to like the idea until I mentioned the amount of money needed.

"Ten dollars," she exclaimed "do you think I'm made of money? Ten dollars for just one football game?"

I tried to explain that the Packers were the best team in the world and that it was a professional game and the players must be paid. After trying to convince her that just seeing the two great teams was worth the money and failing miserably I tried a different angle. I explained that the only reason I ever considered going was because this was Ron's last day and seeing this game would send him home happy. This softened her a little. Instead of saying 'positively not,' she was just saying "no."

Then I told her how seeing this game would be a great help to Ron and I who are both football players. By watching the professionals, we might see ways to improve our game. She weakened more. She was now saying 'we will see.'

Then I explained how yelling at a game such as this would help us to let off "steam" without doing harm to anything. I told her how we would enjoy it and would love her for ever if she let us go. This did no good. She still said, 'we will see.'

I then used my bomb. I explained how allowing us to go would keep Ron and I out of the house and her hair for a couple of hours. That did it. She went straight to the phone and reserved us each a ticket.

The game was wonderful. Ron and I saw the Packers drub the Bears.

Grades included 104 A's, 69 B's, 29 C's, 10 D's, and 2 F's. Although more teachers liked this paper, the writer's approach obviously disturbed several of them who noted (and lowered the grade correspondingly) that the paper violated the assignment ('Assume also that money is not an issue'). Should the teacher admonish the student and/or lower his grade because the assignment is not followed exactly? That question has to be answered by asking another question. Which is more important, the assignment or the student? If the assignment is the center of the writing program then the student who deviates from it must be punished. If the student is the center, then the student should feel free to change the assignment to fit his needs (although a teacher who assigns the topic 'Traditions Can Kill People' may have some right to object to a student who writes on 'My Feelings about the Apollo Moonshots').

The comments

O.K. Clever. Your supporting reasons were presented in an original, creative way.

While this is a good paper it is not the one assigned Money was not to be a problem and the paper was spent relating how two boys extracted money Stick to the assignment from now on

It's obvious that you're going to be a great cartoon artist You know your mother don't you? You handle the dialogue very well and your work shows imagination It does have a rather flat ending Did you just stick that on?

This was a well handled paper You're fluent and your writing is sophisticated but I thought your ending was too cute

A beautiful and clever ending The first paragraph catches my attention and from then on you give good reasons A good use of dialogue

I'm giving you a D because you didn't follow the assignment

If you paid more attention to mechanics and stuck to the assignment maybe you'd learn to write

Except for watching punctuation the sentence structure was very good

At last—a paper where I didn't have to worry about mechanics You write very well and the way you showed your mother was fun to read Maybe you didn't follow the assignment but you improved it Very realistic The ending seemed a little flat

#### PAPER FOUR

Here lies the remains of Janet McLaughman and gay remains they are it's not the gay like at a party but a sober gayatie if there be such a thing There she is in her coffin with a broad smile adorning her simple face This was the day Janet was to go home home being in Ridgewood New York and away from the gay old times we had in Cedar Rapids truly the Big Town Ah yes I remember well the good times we had together the softball game and the cornpicking and the shelling contest And the big day at the church bazzare when mama won the blue ribbon for her pickled pigs tongues The day before she was to leave I had planned on the biggest and most exciting thing she had seen that being a day at the Cedar Rapids Sympathy Janet being a relative of me liked the same thing I do That morning at breakfast Janet had a pale look about her engulfing her whole body in a churchly way Instead of walking down the stairs she flowed not like water flowing in a sand bottomed creek but more like molasses flowing down a hairy sows back She hardly touched a thing on her plate save the coffee You should be happy I said for today we go to the Sympathy and yes what excitement it is with the volins and base volins pianos oh my what an remembered day it will be Then it happed she lost all sanity she begin laughing wildly jumping up and down then she died just like that she kiled over pulp For the rest of my life I shall remember that day for the Sumapiathy played beautifully End

Of the four papers this one led to the greatest disagreement both in grades (18 A's 39 B's 65 C's 52 D's and 40 F's) and comments (Teachers thought it very funny and effective or they hated it (Some even suggested that the writer needed psychiatric help) Several made the same comment they made on the third paper that it was not on the assigned topic

This theme whatever you think its merits or its meaning (and I did not understand or like it) is clearly not written on the assignment given the class It may be an attempt at humor or art but its meaning is obscure to me Stick to the topic and write so other people can understand

Poor spelling

Edgar Allen Poe Jr Your ideas and images are marvelous I hope you're being honest and not putting me on but I don't really care I thought it was funny

This is very confused I don't understand your purpose you punctuate very badly you make very poor choices of descriptive adjectives and the spelling is atrocious Stick to the assignment for once and don't try to be funny Writing is serious business so don't be cute You're in the tenth grade now Act like it

This is original funny and creative It may have terrible spelling but you write beautifully and I could picture almost everything you wrote But don't you think you may have overdone the humor? Some people will misunderstand what you've done and think you're sick You're not but were you really trying hard to misspell all those words or what happened?

Macabre tone! Misspelled words! It imagery very hard to visualize I hope your next theme is more pleasant Your ending sentence is rather calloused Didn't you feel any pity or sympathy for the dead girl?

Come on now! Be serious Numerous misspellings run on sentences problems with awkward sentence constructions and to top it all you didn't even write on the assignment Weren't you listening in class?

Your paper defies any attempt on my part to grade it It isn't on the assignment and I probably should get upset but I loved it Your paper is concrete and detailed and the funniest thing I've read in years Sometimes I wondered if you were serious or funny but it comes off funny

You obviously have trouble expressing yourself clearly and your punctuation and grammar leave much to be desired More worrying yet you use stale clichés and overworked expressions Listen to language around you and don't use so many trite words

A rather smart aleck response though I kind of liked it anyway Still creativity is fine and dandy but it seems to me that it should be directed toward some goal I wonder if your Poe-like approach was intentional or do you really have this worry about death? It seemed a little bit phony at times

**STUDENTS AS EVALUATORS** In addition to teacher-written evaluations, a method which can work involves the students as evaluators. Students are interested in their classmates' work if the assignment challenges them and if the teacher encourages them to be honest in their writing. After trying student evaluations, some teachers complain that students spend most of their time carping about faults, but lacking initial direction and guidelines, they often take the easy way out and emulate their teacher or past teachers. If a teacher seems chiefly interested in putting on a grade, the students will put on grades. If he seems mainly interested in mechanics (as exhibited in his comments on their papers), students will repay in kind. If the teacher tries to evaluate and react and maintain a dialogue with his students, they may do the same, but encouraging students to look at ideas and voice and all the other aspects of writing as a gestalt takes time and patience.

Perhaps the simplest way to begin is to ask students to exchange papers when they have completed a pencil written first draft. At this point, the teacher might ask the students to proofread for mechanical problems: in effect, to act as editor and aid, not competitor.

Once the proofreading stage is past, attention can be directed at more important matters. Is the content clear? Does the reader know what the writer is driving at? Was the voice authentic and human? Was the organization helpful in establishing the purpose? What words seemed strong and what weak? Did the opening words attract your interest? Whatever questions the teacher recommends for consideration or whatever students think important, the fact that student evaluations are to help each other should be established. The teacher should stress the positive, asking students to find two or three good things about a paper for every problem. Students also can be led to understand that the value of discovering a writing problem lies not in finding it but in discussing it with the writer and suggesting possible alternatives. With that awareness, they will take a giant step toward understanding the process of writing.

**CONFERENCES** Ideally, a teacher should confer privately with each student about each paper. However, with 150 to 200 or more students daily, the teacher is unlikely to meet anything bordering on the ideal. This is why it is so vital to make composition evaluation a dialogue rather than a monologue. Nonetheless, occasional conferences with students about specific papers that trouble the teacher or the student are certainly necessary.

**EVALUATION IN CLASS** Since individual conferences present real problems, teachers should evaluate and react to some papers before the class, using an opaque or overhead projector. Too often students

have no real understanding of the process the teacher goes through in his evaluation. They do not understand why he marks something once and ignores it on succeeding papers or why he is particularly upset or impressed by one point or sentence or word. By carefully choosing a paper or two written by students unlikely to become embarrassed, the teacher can easily devote a whole period to exploring problems of evaluation and the way (or ways) he has found comfortable for him and helpful to his students.

## CONCLUSION

Written composition is important to young people for many reasons. Taught by a sympathetic but realistically critical teacher, it can lead to cooperation, not competition.<sup>19</sup> It can encourage students to consider ideas more critically, to choose details and words more precisely, to create something new out of old patterns. Donald M. Murray summarizes both the responsibilities and the opportunities of the writer:

- 1 He discovers a subject
- 2 He senses an audience
- 3 He searches for specifics
- 4 He creates a design
- 5 He writes
- 6 He develops a critical eye
- 7 He rewrites.<sup>20</sup>

Maybe even more important, written composition allows and even encourages young people to dream and wonder and wonder and ponder about their world and themselves as they discover ideas and arguments as they arrange them and as they clothe them in language aimed at a particular audience, an audience that in some cases may be the student thinking working through and finally announcing to him self (and others caring to listen) a solution or resolution to a dilemma or paradox. The teacher's job is to bring the student and the composing process together to benefit both, to open up the world to young people through writing.

Kenneth Koch dedicates his book *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* to his junior English teacher because "She encouraged me to be free and

19 William W. West says: "Written language is important because it allows men from all places and all times to cooperate." *Developing Writing Skills* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 3.

20 Donald M. Murray, *A Teacher Teaches Writing: A Practical Method of Teaching Composition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 1-13.

deep and extravagant in what I wrote so that I could find what was hidden in me that I had to say<sup>21</sup> Giving students ample opportunities to be free and deep and extravagant should be the aim of the composition teacher

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21 Kenneth Koch *Wishes Lies and Dreams* (New York Random 1970)



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# TEACHING LITERATURE

## WHY WOULD STUDENTS WANT TO READ TODAY?

How can an English teacher confronting student antagonism or apathy and teaching during a time when young people are barraged by television and movies justify any kind of literature? Even the dull-est or most rebellious students might grudgingly admit that reading to obtain specific information had some value maybe even that browsing through a magazine or newspaper wasn't too bad. But literature any literature?

What justifications have produced students like that? The purpose of literature is to make you a cultured person. 'You'll never get into college if you don't know certain great works of literature.'

You'd better get this interpretation down because it's going to be on the final test. "Poetry is good for you." I know the literature I'm assigning is hard but literature isn't supposed to be fun. 'Here's the book list for your outside reading. No, I won't accept that book—it's not on the book list I gave you.' Of course, I expect you to write a book report. "Why do we have to read Bryant? Because he's a great writer, that's why." Someday you'll thank me for all I've tried to do for you. Even more offensive than the dictator-teacher is the teacher who gushes 'Boys and girls I just know we're going to have fun in our English class.' 'Don't be afraid to call me Mary Ann. All my other friends do.' 'Don't be afraid to say whatever you want. Everybody's equal in this class, and every opinion is just as good as any other.' Students don't just ignore the effusive teacher, they become genuinely embarrassed.

Our past efforts to make willing readers out of our students have not always been successful. As Daniel Fader has written

Any librarian or bookseller will tell you that the average modern adult avoids bookstores and libraries as though they were leprosariums. Had the goal of modern performance oriented education

been the creation of unwilling readers and writers it could not have succeeded more completely.<sup>1</sup>

What approaches can the English teacher use in talking to his students about literature? What rationale should underlie the literature program he devises for a particular class? What titles could he recommend?

### FIRST AND ALWAYS, LITERATURE SHOULD BE ENJOYABLE

Literature should be fun in the broadest sense of the word. Why then do some teachers seem afraid to communicate this to their classes? Didn't the enjoyment of literature make us teach? Obviously, leisure reading is fun, but reading Plato's *Republic*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Eliot's "The Hollow Men" or Shakespeare's *Othello* can be fun if the student is prepared for the experience and if he has the maturity to handle the material. When the teacher cannot communicate the enjoyment he feels or has chosen material ill suited to a class, that is his fault, not literature's. That's one reason teachers should not teach any literary work they can't be sincerely enthusiastic about. It's better for students to leave any class ignorant of poetry or Shakespeare than repelled or bored by either. Plato, Swift, Faulkner, Eliot, and Shakespeare can be fun to read, if they weren't enjoyable, almost no one would read them. They generate enjoyment whether read closely or summer-hammock skumbed but fun they are. If students want to confront reality or escape reality, literature allows them to find what they wish. If they want to become people they never can really be, Puzo's *The Godfather*, McCullers' *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Hunt's *No Promises in the Wind*, Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, or Platt's *The Boy Who Could Make Himself Disappear* indulges them. If students want to know what it's like to be an alien in a world, Swarthout's *Bless the Beasts and Children*, Hamlet, Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, Wojciechowska's *Shadow of a Bull*, or Neufeld's *Light, Bright and Dark* tells them. If a student needs reassurance about man's nobility and compassion, he should try Cervantes' *Don Quixote* or Hesse's *Siddhartha* or Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* or Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince* or Zindel's *The Pigman* or Armstrong's *Souther* or Platt's *Hey, Dummy* to give him hope. Reading allows young people to see what they want to see, hear what they want to hear. Reading can also challenge and surprise by letting students recognize that what they think they see is not always truth but sometimes veneer, what they hear is not always music but can

<sup>1</sup> *Hooked on Books: Program and Proof* (New York: Berkley, 1968) p. 22

cophony That shock of discovery is an especially exciting facet of reading for students may find *what they do not expect* surprising and sometimes alarming visions of truth But whether students are comforted by discovering the expected or challenged by finding the unexpected reading is fun

**LITERATURE MAY HELP ADOLESCENTS SEE THEMSELVES AND THEIR PROBLEMS** Although many readers are curious about different kinds of people most react favorably to books where the major character or his problems remind them of themselves and their worries Students sympathize with literary characters who have problems parallel to *their own* and they may learn something about themselves in the process They may find to their surprise that their problems are not unique through understanding themselves a little better they may gain some understanding of and sympathy for others Through reading young people can find opportunities for self understanding self identification and self evaluation The word *bibliotherapy* was once widely used to describe the self identification aspect of reading but its concept has been much abused and misused by misguided teachers (Helen here's a book you have to read It's all about this girl with pimples and I'm sure it will help you) Students may never tell a teacher about a book where they found themselves and they may be reluctant to discuss such literature but students do recognize themselves in literature Indeed some literature may shock students by telling them about some facet of their personalities they believe no other human being could recognize or tolerate much less understand Characters as different as Raskolnikov in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* Frank Alpine in *The Assistant* Maggie in Zindel's *The Pigmon* Ponyboy in Hinton's *The Outsiders* Adam in Fast's *April Morning* Loretta in Hunter's *The Soul Brothers* and Sister Lou Holden in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* or Pip in Dickens' *Great Expectations* have all brought the joy of discovery and the shock of recognition simultaneously to students

**LITERATURE PROVIDES VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES BEYOND THE POSSIBILITIES OF SEVERAL LIFETIMES** Literature frees students to read about other people in other places and at other times to see similarities and differences between problems today and problems of literary characters and to meet a multitude of man's dilemmas moral and physical In effect students can *people* their world through reading as they can in no other way Movies and television shows can broaden students' lives if the right one is available at the right time but the time may be inconvenient and the viewer may not be in the mood Through reading however students can choose when they want to visit Sherlock Holmes on Baker Street or travel to early

**Bolshevik Russia** When they choose, students can recognize the absurdity of war in Heller's *Catch-22*, Kosinski's *The Pointed Bird*, or Hasek's *The Good Soldier Schweik*, the horror of war in Cobb's *Paths of Glory*, March's *Company K*, or Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, the clash of cultures in Borland's *When the Legends Die*, Westheimer's *My Sweet Charlie*, Waters' *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, Brown's *Monchild in the Promised Land*, or Bonham's *Vivo Chicono*, or the effects of love in Head's *Mr and Mrs Bo Jo Jones*, Segal's *Love Story*, Marshall's *Christy*, Stolz' *A Love, or a Season*, White's *Charlotte's Web* or Agee's *A Death in the Family*

**LITERATURE EXPOSES YOUNG PEOPLE TO VARIANT VALUE SYSTEMS, IDEAS, AND PRACTICES** Whatever reading students do involves values and judgments, and sometimes the values and judgments will please students and sometimes they will antagonize alarm, or confuse them. Students may question the morality of Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, Hentoff's *I'm Really Drugged But Nothing Gets Me Down*, or Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*. Having read these books or others, alone or in the case of more mature books with the help of a sympathetic and realistic teacher, students may never again be the same people. They may have had their beliefs altered or strengthened, but they certainly will have had their beliefs challenged, and that is healthy intellectual activity for any adolescent or adult. If a student is not aware of the many value structures open to him, he is likely to believe only in those imposed on him by other people. When he is exposed to many views he may temporarily be confused, but ultimately he can take pride in the value system he himself has evolved. The unexamined life is not really life at all, and literature can help students to examine their lives and their values.

**LITERATURE ALLOWS YOUNG PEOPLE TO OBSERVE THEIR LANGUAGE AT WORK** In a time when Orwellian newspeak has become frighteningly more fact than fiction the teacher has the responsibility of making young people aware of the inherent power of words. Through reading adolescents can experience the beauty and freshness of language (or its drabness and sterility) and often consciously or unconsciously they can become discriminating. Obviously the teacher can develop this discrimination through class discussion but students will begin to acquire it themselves by reading widely. For example, young girls often read one Nancy Drew book after another, and it is futile for the teacher (or parent) to object. Inevitably those girls move on to other books, but only when they decide to do so. As they discover Ann Emery's books those of Mary Stolz Jeanette Eyrely, Daphne DuMaurier, or Charlotte Bronte they do become

more critical of many aspects of writing even though they may not express their criticism in the proper literary terms. And all that happens through reading. Additionally through listening to good prose or poetry on records students can become more adept at recognizing the finer nuances of language. Only rarely will students not respond to a recording of Dylan Thomas reading *A Child's Christmas in Wales* or the poetry of Robert Creeley, Donald Hall, May Swenson, or Galway Kinnell. Students also can benefit visually from viewing the literature of short films such as *Why Man Creates*, *Nahanni*, *The Red Balloon*, *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, or *Replay*.

**READING LETS YOUNG PEOPLE DISCOVER A WORLD NEITHER ALL GOOD NOR ALL EVIL.** Through wide reading young people learn about man's fallibility, stupidity, and nobility. Perhaps censors fear literature because uncontrolled reading gives students a chance to see the world's evil and impurity. However, students have always been perplexed by the dual nature of man, just as they have been perplexed by their own duality and ambivalence. Wide reading does indeed expose young people to some unpleasant and unhappy facets of life. Recently Zindel's *The Pigman* and Hinton's *The Outsiders* have been highly popular with adolescents, and both do present some unhappy facts of life, but at the same time, two highly optimistic books, Saint Exupéry's *The Little Prince* and Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* have been widely read. Such reading lets a student discover as many different facets of man as he wishes. It also encourages him to wonder and question, the two major ingredients of real education. Reading books like Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Swarthout's *Bless the Beasts and Children*, Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, or Plath's *The Bell* encourages students to question themselves and others, a necessary exercise for anyone who wishes to learn.

**LITERATURE ALLOWS ADOLESCENTS TO DISCOVER TRUTH AND REALITY.** Although fiction, poetry, and drama are not true, they are lies with more reality and truth in them than the real or the true. It may seem a paradox to young people to discover that literature lets them get past facts and actual events to a higher truth. For example, a reader wishing to learn facts about World War I can go to the almanacs or encyclopedias or Defense Department records to discover what battles were fought, how many died, or what generals were decorated. But the reader interested in learning what war was like or what it did to the people involved in it can read Cobb's *Paths of Glory*, Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, or March's

Company K A reader wishing to understand the depression would do well to read Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* or *In Dubious Battle* or Hunt's *No Promises in the Wind* all of which will yield more truth than the true facts of the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Interior files The reader interested in mental health can likely find statistics galore but Green's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* Johnson's *A Blues I Can Whistle* Eyerly's *The Girl Inside* Neufeld's *Lisa Bright and Dork* or Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* will yield more truth and reality Finding reality is the aim of the English class and of reading as it should be of all life

## READING INTEREST STUDIES

Very shortly after English became a secondary school subject a number of teachers noticed the often alarming discrepancy between literature young people liked and literature assigned in schools To find what young people liked to read teachers and researchers soon developed simple techniques to inventory student reading tastes and during the last seventy years an incredible number of articles about the reading interests of young people have been published Unhappily too few classroom teachers know of the studies and have taken advantage of their suggestions or implications

One of the earliest studies makes clear the potential value to teachers of knowing student taste

We must know what our pupils' original likings are we must share them as much as possible and we must in introducing better things point out in them elements enjoyed in former reading <sup>2</sup>

And slightly more than twenty years later Arthur Jordan underscored and elaborated on that point

If we could determine what the child's major interests are be those interests good or bad it would be possible to direct these forces along lines which are desirable If not directly at least indirectly we could connect the school subject with his interests and show how it is related to them <sup>3</sup>

Assuming that a reading interest study is based on honest responses and represents the tastes of a variety of young people it should give the English teacher some idea of the popular titles of the time and of

<sup>2</sup> Allan Abbot *Reading Tastes of High School Pupils A Statistical Study* School Review 10 (Oct 1902) 586

<sup>3</sup> Arthur M Jordan *Children's Interests in Reading* (Chapel Hill University of North Carolina 1926) p 1

themes or interests likely to appeal to young people. Although one such study might seem suspect because it sampled a limited population or used a questionable technique for gathering data, teachers should note that a large number of studies using different samples and different data gathering devices at different times and places have arrived at many of the same conclusions.

**AGE** One major factor determining reading interests is age. Although a student may pursue one reading interest—for example, animal stories—with passion for a seemingly indefinite period of time, he is most likely to pursue that interest in elementary or junior high school. He is equally likely to be highly indignant if not hurt or irritated if a teacher recommends or requires him to read an animal story after his interest has passed. That may in part explain some of the difficulties teachers have had in teaching *Animal Farm* to unsophisticated or immature students who do not see the story's metaphor. Reading interests such as Nancy Drew, joke books, socially significant novels, career tales, or religious books are more likely to occur at certain points in a student's life and depend on the level of the subject matter and the reader's own psychological maturity. If a young person enjoys reading, he is most likely to reach a peak of enthusiasm and to read most widely sometime in the seventh or eighth grade. After that, other interests are likely to interfere more and more with his reading, not necessarily arresting his interest but almost certainly slowing it down.

**SEX** The other major factor in reading interest is sex. Although children may be content to read the same books or have them read aloud somewhere around the fourth grade, it is made clear to boys that they need special materials appealing to them. Unfair or not, after that time boys are not likely to enjoy girls' books, but girls will usually read and enjoy boys' books. Practically, that means the English teacher must choose common reading that will appeal to boys, ignoring Jane Eyre, Rebecca, Mrs. Mike, or *Pride and Prejudice*. *Wuthering Heights* works in some classes, partly because *Heathcliff* dominates the novel. Boys' objections to the poetry taught in school are at least partially the result of teaching poems which seem didactic, romantic, mushy, or sweet. Getting boys to relate to literature is often a major problem, but it can become insoluble if the literature presented is incorrectly oriented.

**MOVIES AND TELEVISION** Movies often influence a reader's choice of books. During the last few years, television specials based on books such as *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* and *Go Ask Alice* have proved popular. As have books based on television series such as *Get Smart*, *Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, and *Star Trek*.



Although an English teacher can benefit from reading several general reading interest studies<sup>4</sup> he and his students would be better off if he took his own class reading interest survey. Such a limited sample might not produce earthshaking results, but it might give the teacher some insight into the nature of his students' reading. All the teacher needs to do is ask his students to list the five or ten books they have most enjoyed reading in the last year or so. These lists can help the teacher individualize instruction and reading programs and can help the teacher seeking appropriate longer works for common reading. That students will list titles incorrectly or forget books they very much liked is inevitable, but since the classroom teacher is not looking for scientific precision but rather for help in his teaching, imprecision should not prevent every teacher from taking such a sample every year with every class.

## PLANNING THE LITERATURE PROGRAM

How is the teacher to determine where to begin choosing from the seemingly unlimited supply of hardback and paperback materials in literature today? What shall he include and exclude? How shall he develop the material? What methods should he use? How and where should he end? Even if the teacher is in a school with a carefully prescribed literature curriculum, he will still need to determine an order and method of presentation. Fortunately for most teachers, fewer high schools are prescribing their literature programs, and the teacher may have almost complete choice of what he teaches and how he develops his class. So where does the teacher begin his planning?

**FINDING OUT ABOUT STUDENTS** The teacher should find out as much as he can about his students, possibly by using the student interest inventory mentioned in an earlier chapter. The teacher should have some idea of the leisure activities popular in the area and the cultural facilities his students might sometimes frequent. He should be aware of the economic level of the families in the district, just as he should know the dominant political, religious, and moral climate. Of course, he shouldn't knuckle under, but he can avoid inadvertently and pointlessly offending some of his students.

<sup>4</sup> A comprehensive review of reading interest studies is presented in Alan C. Purves and Richard Beach, *Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature* (Urbana, Ill.: CTLE, 1972), pp. 61-144. The one most ambitious reading interest study is George W. Norvell's *The Reading Interests of Young People* (Boston: Heath, 1950).<sup>\*</sup> A book no longer usable for its lists of titles but still valuable for its conclusions and suggestions.

**ESTABLISHING THEMES** Despite school district variations universal questions of value to adolescents anywhere should underlie any literature program. Who am I and why am I here? What is my place in the universe? Why do we fail to communicate with one another? Is anyone else as lonely as I am? Why do we hate other people? Why are we so cruel to each other? What or who determines right and wrong? Is ambition a force for evil or good?

A literature program can be built on these or other questions using materials and teaching methods that appeal to a particular age or ability level. Obviously, classics center on these questions, but so do books with greater adolescent appeal such as science fiction, popular novels, magazines, rock lyrics, protest essays and poetry, television, and movies. The universal question of what to do if conscience and duty conflict is at the heart of *Antigone*, 'Civil Disobedience,' 'Self-Reliance,' and *An Enemy of the People*. It is also taken up in science fiction such as Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* or Herbert's *Dune*, adolescent literature such as Hentoff's *I'm Really Drugged But Nothing Gets Me Down* or Neufeld's *Sleep Two, Three, Four*, and movies such as *Lonely Are the Brave*, or *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*.

**CHOOSING MATERIALS** With the plethora of materials and choices available, today's teacher may have more problem in choosing what to use than in dredging up enough materials to keep a class moving. It might be wise to point out that a teacher cannot cover every work and in any case should not worry about trying to cover the entire literary waterfront. How much poetry could or should be handled during any semester is an impossible question to answer, but surely there is some happy medium between devoting six weeks to *Evangeline* or knocking off twenty-five poems of Emily Dickinson in one class period (which may not be the Olympic record for number of poems killed at one sitting, but it was a substantial local one).

Teachers can gain support, respect, and above all student enthusiasm by involving them in the selection of materials and in daily and weekly planning. However, although students may have ideas about what they would like to do, they often do not know what their choices are. Therefore, the teacher should present possible choices to his students. Obviously, students may prove to be narrow or provincial or myopic, but they should be involved. If allowing students to participate in the selection and planning processes can lead to chaos, an evil to be avoided, surely ignoring students and dictating what is to be done can lead to a deadly-dull and authoritarian class, an evil even more to be avoided. A beginning teacher may be more comfortable in a relatively structured class where discipline problems are less likely to arise, but even that teacher can involve his students by allowing

them to select or recommend some literature to be read for excitement or sheer pleasure. In planning any series of teaching days the teacher could seek students' help in recommending activities they'd especially like. As the teacher becomes more relaxed with his classes he might let the class determine (or assist in determining) class goals and objectives, how these goals might be achieved, and how effectively or ineffectively the goals are met.

Deciding with students how to make learning more exciting, different, relevant, and fun is much more difficult than is a proprietary decision. It is also much more rewarding, and students just possibly might begin to care about the class. Role playing, making videotapes or films, dramatizing, constructing collages, scripting TV advertisements, bringing in people from the community and making students aware of the cultural resources of the community, bringing in guests from other departments, reading aloud frequently, all are or should be part of the literature curriculum, and these activities and many more might be brought to the teacher's attention if that teacher asks for student help. That students may sometimes be indifferent or may provide little help should not discourage the teacher. If the students have previously had dictatorial teachers, this teacher is going to have to develop a class atmosphere and a class rapport before he can expect students to respect each other and take on responsibility.

The six questions below, carefully considered and honestly answered, might help a teacher determine what literature he would use for common reading.

- 1 Why precisely is the teacher using this work with these students at this time? (The teacher should avoid any justifications based on prescribed courses of study, use of the class anthology, parental pressures, poor libraries, or the needs of uncultured youth.)
- 2 What is the effect or impression the teacher wants his students to get from the work in question? How will he teach the work to get this across without having to tell students what he wants? What kinds of teaching aids or methods will help?
- 3 What obscurities, techniques, or language problems might get in the students' way? What background or technical matters or data are absolutely vital to the understanding of the work? In what way would ignoring these matters hurt the work? How should these roadblocks be eliminated?
- 4 What handles, terms, techniques, or concepts are needed by students before the work can be understood? How can the teacher approach the technique or concept or term in a way that will help his students with this literary work?
- 5 Must the teacher teach this work? Must it be handled as a class assignment, or could it be taught in a different way?

- 6 How can teacher and students evaluate their understanding of the work in terms of the teacher's (and the class's) objectives as determined by the answers to items 1 and 2 above?

## ORGANIZING THE LITERATURE PROGRAM

Although there is no one way and certainly no perfect way to organize a literature program, there are six frequently used methods that may give coherence and purpose to a block of time. Each has its adherents and detractors, and each potentially can be used to realize the values of literature to young people discussed earlier in this chapter.

**THE CHRONOLOGICAL APPROACH** Although only eleventh and twelfth grade texts commonly fall in this pattern, and a number of new hardback anthologies ignore chronology, the chronological method of presenting literature is the oldest teaching approach. It began when the study of literature, especially the literature of England, was virtually an adjunct of literary history, and for years nearly every high school anthology of American literature began with the Puritans, of English literature with Chaucer. While there is an inherent logic in beginning anything at its origins, the logic does not lead to sound pedagogy. Probably the least appealing facet of American literature is the Colonial period, and for adolescents the teacher can eliminate the word probably. Directly after the Puritans come the writers of the Revolutionary period (most of whom will be mentioned or studied in American history class the same year), followed by the Transcendentalists. Although a few students genuinely enjoy reading Hawthorne, Thoreau, Bradstreet, or Emerson, surely those writers should not be read early in a course. Some chronological anthologies have begun with modern American literature and then gone back to Puritan times, presumably aiming to interest students before getting to the really important material, the old stuff. One of the major dangers of these two methods is that they may turn a course in literature into one in literary history where writers illustrate movements and trends rather than live, live then and now. Unhappily, some writers and their works studied in eleventh grade American literature demand sophistication and maturity more often found in twelfth graders, and some writers of English literature could just as easily be taught in the eleventh grade. Some schools have modified the chronological approach by studying certain key ideas, periods, or writers, irrespective of their American or English origin. In other schools, literature of non-English-speaking countries has been included.

**THE GENRE APPROACH** This approach, focusing on a concentrated study of poetry, short stories, or essays and less commonly on drama or biography, is especially common in ninth- or tenth-grade anthologies, and now is not uncommon in anthologies for other grades. Again, there is inherent logic in the method. What could be more profitable than taking one form of literature and studying it in depth and detail? Unfortunately, students may rapidly tire of too many short stories tied together only by their shortness. And for most students, especially younger or slower ones, poetry should probably be interspersed with other forms of literature rather than given in a two- or three-week dose. Just as the study of chronology can become the study of literary history, so can the study of a genre become the study of literary techniques and terms. Important as these may be when placed in their proper context for students able to understand and handle them, they can easily become the vehicle for a deadly barrage of teacher questions: "Why is the opening scene significant?" "How does that short story fit into the short story tradition I lectured on last week?" "Can you tell me where the climax of the story takes place?" Some innovative teachers have developed stimulating genre units around ideas such as the world of tomorrow or we are all in prisons of our own making. Other teachers have brought in filmed versions of short stories and have introduced an intra media dimension to literature. Students, and possibly some teachers, may assume that a filmed short story is just that, a film precisely like the short story, but the two media are different, demanding different skills and different techniques. Therefore a comparison of short story and film could be salutary. For example, a teacher might introduce Thurber's "The Unicorn in the Garden," Bierce's "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," Jackson's "The Lottery," Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," or Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death", and then compare them with the filmed versions.

While genre studies of drama are less common, mostly because the length of individual plays precludes including more than three or four in any genre unit, films can bring the teaching of drama to life. Reading and dramatizing plays in class is common, using recordings helps, but using film brings the faces and voices of real actors living a part to the class. Filmed versions of plays are fairly common, for instance the teacher can obtain *Oedipus Rex*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Our Town*, and *A Long Day's Journey into Night*.

**THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL WORKS** The Riverside Classics editions of many years ago popularized the use of class sets, and today it is not uncommon to see sets of *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Hiroshima*, *Walden*, *The Mortal Chronicles*, or

*The Pearl*, more often than not in paperback. A one- or two-week unit allows the teacher enough time to go into some depth in exploring ideas and techniques and for many teachers excited about one work that does not fit any other teaching approach, the method can be most profitable. Students can develop understanding of how to read a particular work carefully. Perhaps they might first follow and then discuss the teacher's way of getting at the work. However, the teacher must emphasize that his is not the only approach. To do this, the teacher might demonstrate several approaches—sociological, historical, psychological, biographical, archetypal, or didactic—to Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, or he might help the students understand several handles to use or several entries into *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Pigman*, *Charley*, or any long work deserving study. The choice of work and the ways of getting into it depend only upon the maturity, ability, and imagination of the teacher.<sup>5</sup> The teacher might select long works by these criteria

- 1 It should appeal to both boys and girls
- 2 It should be slightly above the reading level of the class and should yield its ideas and reality with the help of the teacher and class discussion. It ought to be one students are not likely to choose on their own, either because they do not know it or because it looks to be a trifle difficult
- 3 The work should be one that is likely to be brought up again, preferably several times in the year, one that can be related in theme or technique to material the teacher wishes to take up later
- 4 It should teach something about the process and nature of literature, about symbolism or point of view or characterization and should be an outstanding example (for the class at this time) of this process
- 5 The work should be short enough to be covered within a week or two-week block of time. If studying it becomes a disaster, the teacher may cut it short, if it is a delight, the teacher might add another week. However, too much of even the best of literature is too much
- 6 The work should involve students in a human dilemma and give some tentative insights students otherwise might not have seen
- 7 It should be relatively free from materials which will bring shrieks of anguish from parents, administration, or school board. Censorship always presents a problem to English teachers trying

<sup>5</sup> A sound helpful discussion of possible ways of getting at a work is in J. N. Hook's *The Teaching of High School English* 4th ed. (New York: Ronald, 1972)

to bring life into the classroom but it becomes a particular problem when choosing the longer work to be read in common

One major problem always faces the teacher choosing a long work for common reading. It must be readable and possible for all the class members. Since the class may easily range from one student who has never read a book (or so he brags) and reads at approximately second grade level to another student who has just finished *Exodus* and *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* last week, the choice of any work appealing to and likely to be read by an entire class is difficult to say the least.

**THE THEMATIC APPROACH** Organizing literature by themes or ideas goes back to the 1930s or slightly earlier. Less easily structured than the chronological or genre approaches and not nearly so academically respectable (how many college English departments use the thematic units?) the thematic approach has vacillated in its pedagogical appeal and use. It has frequently been controversial, its defenders pointing out that it can be used to interrelate several literary forms and bring together the skills of composition and literature into a real *gestalt*, its detractors arguing that it too easily becomes amorphous and drags together literary works which are bound only in the teacher's imagination.

A teacher using a thematic approach usually begins with a universal question or an archetype, finds a body of literature and film developing it and integrates writing, speaking, reading and viewing into the pursuit of its aspects. Although an occasional thematic unit does ludicrously force literature into a pattern it does not fit (a story probably apocryphal is told of a teacher who included *The Lottery* in a unit on getting along with one's family), teaching literature within the context of an idea or question might benefit both literature and students. A universal question such as why does man praise individuality and practice conformity has been considered by many writers at many times in many places. Thoreau worried about it in *Walden* as did Skinner, although differently, in *Walden Two*. Other writers have seen other angles: Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Abbey's *The Brave Cowboy*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Zindel's *The Pigman*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Hentoff's *In the Country of Ourselves*, and Heinlein's *Stronger in a Stronger Land* illustrate the point. Sometimes a thematic unit listed only as a single word or short phrase contains implied questions: the unknown (What is it? Why do we fear it?), war (Why does war persist? What does war do to humanity?), the world tomorrow (What lies ahead of mankind? Why does man try to foresee the future?), humor (Why does man need to laugh? What basic things make him do it?). A thematic approach is often used in junior

high school and employs subjects such as animals making decisions courage or voyages As students become more sophisticated themes like the following could serve as centers for the study of literature loneliness finding who you are the Devil in art forms ambition man faces death man faces crises or the city

A summary of some possible activities that can be undertaken in the first week and a half of a student thematic unit may give the teacher a better idea of the scope and nature of this approach

### MAN IN CRISES

Objectives to help the student understand what a crisis situation is and how it affects individuals to gain insight into the kinds of stress man faces to have the student look at and analyze literary characters and real people facing crisis to help the student gain insight into his own crises and to show him some tentative responses open to him

Books of possible interest to students to be read during free reading time probably in the third and fourth weeks after the theme idea is clear Baldwin's *Nobody Knows My Name* Faulkner's *Light in August* Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* Malamud's *The Assistant* Gunther's *Death Be Not Proud* Bonham's *Durango Street* Updike's *Rabbit Run* Segal's *Love Story* Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* Keyes' *Charley* Swarthout's *Bless the Beasts and Children* Donovan's *I'll Get There It Better Be Worth the Trip* Wojciechowska's *Shadow of a Bull* Neufeld's *Edgar Allen* McKays' *Dave's Song* Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* Hesse's *Siddhartha* Rawlings' *The Yearling* Fairbairn's *Five Smooth Stones* Saroyan's *The Human Comedy* Plath's *The Bell Jar* Parks' *The Learning Tree* Toomer's *Cane* Corle's *Fig Tree* John Griffin's *Black Like Me* Gregory's *Nigger*

Week 1 The teacher can begin the unit by showing *Neighbors* a nine-minute Norman McLaren film depicting the fight of two men over a flower growing on their common boundary line a fight that ultimately becomes a war Students in the past have reacted strongly to the film some positively and some negatively but few apathetically The teacher can ask his students about the crisis in the film and whether it or the following war seemed credible Answers to these questions could lead to a student explanation of crisis and exploration of what it did to these men and what other crises can do or have done to others If the discussion goes well it might take the whole period if it does not another film *The Stringbean Toys A or The Question* might be used to get at the idea of the crises common or individual large or small facing mankind The next day students can consider *Richard Cory* both as a poem by Robinson and a song by Simon and Garfunkel and *Mr Flood's Party* How do people like Cory and Flood differ in the crises they face? Is there a difference in the tone used to present the crisis in each? Does loneliness lead to crises wholly different than those



caused by human interaction? After briefly discussing with the class the nature of the crises in some of the books they might read during free reading in the next week or two the teacher might discuss the different kinds of crises modern (and earlier) man has faced—personal professional, romantic and racial—allowing students to develop the types and to introduce examples they know. The class might then read a short story emphasizing a point of great crisis for the major character for example 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,' 'The Day of the Last Rock Fight,' 'The Most Dangerous Game' 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber,' or 'A & P,' the choice depending on the maturity of the students. The week might be concluded by watching another perhaps longer and more mature film for example, *Nahanni*, *The House*, *A Matter of Survival*, *Geronimo Jones* or *Imo Mon*.

Week II The teacher could begin by reading or telling the plot of a short story, stopping just short of its resolution. Based on this students could then discuss the nature of fiction and the presentation of a character faced with a problem or crisis which he must resolve. Students might like to discuss possible endings for the plot read by the teacher or to write their own conclusions in a few paragraphs. If writing is done the teacher should first preview the problems students are likely to encounter, basing his analysis on his awareness of his students and their writing needs. This exercise can present interesting possibilities if students are willing to write, for the possibilities of different endings combined with the variety of student viewpoints could yield some fascinating papers and insights. A comparison of the many different ways of resolving the story might amuse or intrigue students. Plots in miniature can often be found in newspaper human interest stories. For example

#### \$0.00 Check May Satisfy Computer

New York (AP)

A Consolidated Edison billing computer kept sending a woman customer notices that her gas and electricity would be cut off unless she paid \$0.00.

Despite protests to the utility that their figures showed she owed nothing, the notices continued.

Finally, the woman, who asked not to be identified, wrote a check for \$0.00.

The computer has not replied, she said. (January 30, 1973)

#### Fat Prisoner Gets Stuck Bars Escape of 64

Tula, Mexico (AP)

A prisoner too fat to get through the hole in the wall blocked a pathway to freedom for 64 of his fellow inmates in the Tula jail.

Six prisoners escaped through the hole that had been knocked into the wall of the jail yard before the fat one became stuck.

A police spokesman said 71 prisoners were held in the jail, and 64 were waiting their turn to go through the hole after the fat man

who was not identified. Three of those who escaped through the hole before it was blocked were recaptured shortly afterwards police said. The other three remained at large (September 19 1971)

A thematic approach can easily lead to superficial social or personal commentary rather than to intensive study of literature. It may easily meander and lack direction and students may be quite content to wander into interesting byways unrelated to literature. It may allow a teacher to settle for easy and obvious literature rather than the best literature accessible to and readable by students.

At the same time social and personal issues are important to students and they are at the heart of most literature. Even though a thematic unit may include second or third rate material it can also include good and great literature. Of great importance is a student's need to read something he will like and can handle and thematic units allow more opportunity for individualizing reading assignments and instruction than almost any other method except free reading.

**FREE READING** Although free reading now often called individualized reading began in the 1920s. Dr. Lou LaBrant began its first large scale use at Ohio State in the middle 1930s.<sup>6</sup> The object of free reading is to encourage students by giving them a block of time usually from three to five weeks during which their sole obligation in English is to read. Although few teachers who give students free reading time would restrict them to books chosen from a list some teachers do insist that students read only books or limit choices to the books in the school library. However many others place no restrictions on the reading allowing students to read what they will as they will when they will. The teacher who tries free reading must have certain attitudes and should be willing to accept certain responsibilities if he does not his chances of success are slight. The teacher must really believe that his students will improve in reading and will enjoy reading far more if they choose their own selections. He must be a reader who is willing to communicate his delight in reading to students by serving as a model. He must know many books at many levels of difficulty and taste and he must be willing and able to recommend books to students that they really might like. He must make a number of books available to students giving them wide reading choices. He must know his students' tastes and reading interests or be willing to discover them rapidly. He must work surreptitiously to recommend books which might lead to better or more difficult reading.

<sup>6</sup> Lou LaBrant, *An Evaluation of the Free Reading in Grades Ten, Eleven, and Twelve*. Ohio State University Studies Contributions to Education no. 2 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press 1936)

for his students. The teacher must recognize how very onerous a task supervising free reading is. He must be able to bring specific students in contact with specific books for specific reasons and judging how to do that tactfully is no small job. Some teachers, most of whom would be unwilling to take on the responsibility of free reading criticize the approach as an opportunity for the teacher to loaf and the student to do nothing. If exciting students about reading is nothing then perhaps it is time for English teachers to close shop. Besides English teachers spend so much time talking about the joy of reading it may be time to prove that reading is a joy, and that suggests students ought to be given time to read in class.

Some teachers devote one day a week, usually Friday, to free reading. Admirable as this appears, it allows little reading continuity. If a student is excited by a book begun on Friday, he may, of course, continue his reading the next day—if he has free time during the weekend. Teachers often let students read on Fridays because they need time to catch up on paper work. What a terrible model the teacher is. If he asks his students to read while he works, does he not make clear the difference between the playing student and the working adult?

With the growth of elective programs in English, many schools have begun one semester individual reading programs. While they present slightly different problems, particularly in grading and evaluation, they are usually just longer, better developed free reading programs.<sup>7</sup>

**OTHER APPROACHES** Two new ways of organizing the literature curriculum have appeared in the last few years, but both are basically variations on or combinations of the approaches discussed above. The humanities approach interrelates that whole world—developing the study of a universal question or historical period through painting, sculpture, music, drama, poetry, history, and film.<sup>8</sup> The electives approach, which has captured the interest of an incredible number of English teachers in an incredibly short time, suggests the restructuring of the final two years of high school English (more rarely the last three years) into a series of electives chosen by the students. Basically

<sup>7</sup> For descriptions of two excellent semester long programs see Bruce C. Appleby and John W. Conner, "Well, What Did You Think of It?" *English Journal* 54 (Oct. 1965): 606-12; the Robert Larabell, "The Punch is Paperback Power," *Arizona English Bulletin* 14 (Feb. 1972): 45-52.

<sup>8</sup> A fine collection of articles edited by Sheila Schwartz, *Teaching the Humanities: Selected Readings* (New York: Macmillan, 1970) should be consulted by every English teacher, whether that teacher ever plans to teach humanities or not, since the book has many excellent suggestions for anyone concerned with any teaching of any art.

the electives approach is nothing more than a series of half-semester (usually called mini elective) or semester-long courses. The literature electives are arranged chronologically: Survey of American Literature, There'll Always be an England, The Theater—Then and Now, and World Literature; by genre: Twentieth Century American Novels, Modern Poetry, Film Study—Film Making and Short Stories, or by theme: The American Dream, Man and Superman, Search for Identity, Literature of the Supernatural, Man in Conflict, and The Future and Beyond. Many electives defy classification, for example: The Southwest in Literature, Minority Literature, Studies in Literature: Indians of the Americas, and Sports Literature. An elective in short stories is obviously genre-oriented, but it can be taught as a chronological study of the development of the form or as a series of short thematic units, such as: The American Dream in Short Stories, The Idea of Tragedy in Short Stories, The Many Faces of Isolation in Short Stories, and Initiation and the Short Story.<sup>9</sup>

## STUDENT RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

Teachers must be aware that "A novel or poem or play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols. The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings. Out of this complex process emerges a more or less organized imaginative experience."<sup>10</sup> Getting students to transform inkspots into meaningful symbols and honest responses is no mean task.

Ever since I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* shocked English teachers into questioning their strategies for getting students to respond to literature and the validity of the methods by which they led students to their responses, both teachers and researchers have attempted to discover what methods are most likely to free the student from the teacher's omnipresence. Anyone who has worked with college students recognizes the horrified expression that will spread over an entire class when a poem is distributed lacking author identi-

9 A basic book about elective programs is Project APEX: Appropriate Placement for Excellence in English 4th ed. rev. (Trenton, Mich.: Trenton Public Schools, 1970). A criticism and discussion of the virtues and problems of the Trenton program is found in George Hilllocks' *An Evaluation of Project APEX: A Nongraded Phase Elective English Program* (Trenton, Mich.: Trenton Public Schools, 1971). A handy collection of articles about specific electives is in the February 1972 *Arizona English Bulletin*.

10 Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, rev. ed. (New York: Noble, 1968), p. 25.

fication. When asked what the poem is about, the student may struggle valiantly to respond. Asked to comment upon the literary worth of the poem, students are often bewildered at best, terror-stricken at worst. They ask, timidly, "Who wrote it?" "When was it written?" "Where can we find criticism of the poem?"<sup>11</sup> The danger of being wrong and the difficulty of an educated guess frequently prove too great a restraint, and students maintain silence. Silence can indeed be golden; the silence of these students, based on intellectual hypocrisy, is wooden.

Fortunately, younger students are often unafraid to venture opinions about poetry, or indeed about almost anything. Teachers should be aware of the different kinds of responses likely to emerge from different students at different ages. Although considerable research has been done in this area,<sup>12</sup> teachers should frequently observe and collect information about different student responses to different works. Listening to a tape recording of student responses several times might open a teacher's eyes and might help him to understand the particular literary and psychological roadblocks that interfere with his students' reading and comprehension.

## EXPANDING STUDENT RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

Why does one reader react apathetically to the poetry of May Swenson while an equally perceptive reader waxes ecstatic? Why does one reader find the world in the microcosm of Piet Hein's "Grooks" while a friend finds them little more than childish jokes? Why does one English teacher recognize genius in the poems of e. e. cummings while another finds them outlandish, badly-spelled, incoherent exercises in non-poetry? An easy and not terribly satisfying but gloriously arrogant explanation is the old cliché, there's no disputing taste. However, English teachers sometimes cite that comment and devote the remainder of their lives to disputing that of their students.

Obviously, our enthusiasms or antipathies are products of our conscious and unconscious lives. Our responses to any stimuli, artistic or not, may not be entirely predictable but they are largely predetermined. Although students may not yet have had time or

11 Richards' *Practical Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, 1929), written more than forty years ago, may be the single most important book concerning literature. Every English teacher should know it and understand it well enough to apply it in his classroom teaching.

12 A recent publication discusses several studies and offers a comprehensive bibliography on the topic. Alan C. Purves and Richard Beach, *Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1972), pp. 1-60.

opportunity to have many experiences or to know many kinds of people they come to a teacher with some fairly predictable responses to literature. By the time they enter high school many have a clear cut and passionate dislike for poetry an entirely different feeling for short stories

If students come to high school antagonistic to learning in general or English in particular or if worse yet they arrive apathetic or frightened what can the teacher do to establish the teaching climate and rapport necessary to develop a literature program where both students and literature win? What can the teacher do to create a student response centered literature program where students and literature become the heart of the classroom and the teacher becomes a helper not an interrupter or interloper?

Alan C Purves lists the four objectives of a response centered poetry program

- 1 An individual will feel secure in his response to a poem and not be dependent on someone else's response. An individual will trust himself
- 2 An individual will know why he responds the way he does to a poem—what in him causes that response and what in the poem causes that response. He will get to know himself
- 3 An individual will respect the responses of others as being valid for them as his is for him. He will recognize his differences from other people
- 4 An individual will recognize that there are common elements in people's responses. He will recognize his similarity with other people<sup>13</sup>

How does a teacher present literature and what kind of literature does he present to bring about a response centered literature program?

**BEGIN WITH MATERIAL THAT AROUSES IMMEDIATE RESPONSES** Most important the teacher must select literature or help the students find literature that arouses in them a strong emotional tactile or intellectual reaction. A reader must be excited by what he reads. He should be stimulated enough to need to talk or argue about it to question it to act in response to it to apply it to his own life and to care what other people think about it. Posters pictures or music chosen because they might reach students or get at them could be the stimulus. Perhaps a recent editorial might anger students. One of the best ways to get students involved and aroused is to use films not

13 How Porcupines Make Love Notes on a Response-Centered Curriculum [Lexington Mass Xerox 1972] p 31

educational horrors like 'Our Friend, The Introductory Adverbial Clause' or 'Genuflecting at the Bust of a Great Writer' or "Outlining for Fun and Profit," but exciting films that get to young people. Students are visually oriented today. With the help of a good teacher, literature will eventually touch most adolescents, but film will touch them faster and easier. Films may not be panaceas for every pedagogical ill, but they are almost certain to arouse student reaction and comment if the teacher doesn't act as authority, interpreter, and interloper. One wonderful facet of films is that there is no book of final wisdom a teacher can consult to determine the meaning or the way to view the film. With film, the teacher may have no more knowledge of what the filmmaker meant than the student. That's one good reason for using film to begin a response-centered curriculum.

Short stories may provoke or touch the young, if they aren't given as just one more assignment. Preferably, the teacher should read some of them aloud, for students do enjoy oral interpretations of literature if the teacher chooses that literature with his audience in mind, if he obviously likes the literature, and if he works to bring the work alive and to involve his audience. He may not be the ideal oral interpreter, but he is the only one his classes have. As such, he should practice and perform. Most English teachers are natural-born hams, or would like to be, and reading aloud becomes fun for both them and their students. Some stories he might choose are

Joseph Whitehill's 'The Day of the Last Rock Fight,' the initiation of a young and very troubled boy into the world of love, hatred and murder

D. H. Lawrence's 'The Rocking Horse Winner' a moody mystical story about the death of a very sensitive boy, killed by a world and a society that cannot tolerate innocence,

Ring Lardner's 'Haircut' the story of a small town practical joker who goes one joke too far, and leads to death

James Thurber's 'The Greatest Man in the World' a pointed and delightful satire about the American view of the hero

C. D. B. Bryan's 'So Much Unfairness of Things' concerning a student who is involved with a problem of cheating on a test, or

Irwin Shaw's 'The Eighty Yard Run' the story of a football hero who remains a perpetual adolescent while the rest of the world passes him by

Whatever else the teacher has in his professional library he should have several anthologies of short stories at hand that contain material likely to involve students.<sup>14</sup>

14 Four excellent paperback collections are James Moffett and Kenneth McElheny *Points of View* (New York: New American Library, 1966); David Sohn *Ten Top Stories* (New York: Bantam, 1964); Robert Gold *Point of Departure*; 19 *Stories of Youth and Discovery* (New York: Dell, 1967); and Eric Berger

**USING POETRY TO GET RESPONSES** But what of poetry? How can the teacher read poetry that will arouse his classes? How can he develop a student response centered poetry program? How have teachers turned students off in the past?

Students arrive that first day of class preconditioned to hate poetry because too many teachers have exposed them to poetry with adult themes before students had the maturity or sophistication to handle them, because too many teachers have implied that a kind of intellectual mystique was a prerequisite to any true understanding of the "poet's communion with God and Nature", because too many teachers have overstressed the techniques and technicalities of poetry and have bored young people with talks and tests of metaphor and anapest and scansion and heroic couplets. One group of students listed these six reasons for disliking poetry

- 1 All poems have a 'hidden' meaning
- 2 All poems are a spontaneous creation
- 3 All poems deal with a suitable poetic subject (trees flowers love)
- 4 All poems have a pronounced rhythm that you beat out with your pencil
- 5 All poems have an obvious rhyme scheme (rub dub tub etc)
- 6 All poets are "qucer"

How can the teacher bring poems and students together without killing either or both? Choosing poems that are masculine and brief is essential. Finding simplicity (real or apparent) in style and idea is important. Above all being enthusiastic and sharing that enthusiasm with his students is necessary. Teachers should however be willing to accept the inevitable failure of some of their choices and they must remember that they cannot give the final word about any poem. If a teacher brings some poems to class and shares them he should allow students to bring in poems they like. If there is any one question that the teacher should avoid in early discussions of any poem it would be 'What does the poet mean in this poem?' References to critics' notions of what a poem is saying might be entertaining later in the year, but the teacher should always eschew matters only peripheral to the poem: an analysis of the writer's life, the techniques of poetry or its history. Instead he should center on the experience conveyed by the poem and students' experiences and responses to it.<sup>16</sup>

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Best Short Stories (New York: Scholastic 1958). The last book is especially valuable since its stories are very short and rarely take more than five or ten minutes to read.

15 Reported by Ann Vosovic in the October 1967 Arizona English Bulletin pp. 23-24.



A poem which might work with boys is Yevtushenko's "Lies."

Telling lies to the young is wrong.  
 Proving to them that lies are true is wrong.  
 Telling them that God's in his heaven  
 and all's well with the world is wrong.  
 The young know what you mean. The young are people.  
 Tell them the difficulties can't be counted,  
 and let them see not only what will be  
 but see with clarity these present times.  
 Say obstacles exist they must encounter  
 sorrow happens, hardship happens.  
 The hell with it. Who never knew  
 the price of happiness will not be happy.  
 Forgive no error you recognize,  
 it will repeat itself, increase,  
 and afterwards our pupils  
 will not forgive in us what we forgave.

Although one young girl was recently heard to say, "That isn't a poem. It doesn't rhyme," most students respond immediately and instinctively to Yevtushenko's words.

Another poem that has been successfully used in getting students to open up is Jarrell's "Protocols." Unlike Yevtushenko, Jarrell uses words and refers to places students may not know, and at first glance his poem may seem less immediately relevant to their lives. But it is just as relevant as Resnais' short film, *Night and Fog*, or the World War I poems of Owen, especially "Dulce et Decorum Est."

### PROTOCOLS

(Birkenau, Odessa; the children speak alternately.)

We went there on the train. They had big borges that they tawed.  
 We stood up, there were so many I was squashed.  
 There was a smoke-stack, then they made me wash.  
 It was a factory, I think. My mother held me up  
 And I could see the ship that made the smoke.

When I was tired my mother carried me.  
 She said, "Don't be afraid." But I was only tired.  
 Where we went there is no more Odessa.

16. In a conversation with Archibald MacLeish, Mark Van Doren said, "To be a true teacher, it seems to me, you must assist them [students] to do this very thing . . . namely, realize what is in them, because that's the only thing that matters. You see, a poem is for the reader finally, isn't it? Surely, it is true for the reader and isn't true for anybody else." And MacLeish answered, "It doesn't exist anywhere else except in the mind of the man who reads it at the moment he reads it. . . . Otherwise, it's a document on a page." Warren V. Bush, ed., *The Dialogues of Archibald MacLeish and Mark Van Doren* (New York: Dutton, 1964), pp. 99-100.

They had water in a pipe—like rain, but hot  
The water there is deeper than the world

And I was tired and fell in in my sleep  
And the water drank me That is what I think  
And I said to my mother, "Now I'm washed and dried  
My mother hugged me and it smelled like hay  
And that is how you die And that is how you die

Reactions to Yevtushenko's poem may be speedy and spirited, but responses to Jarrell's poem may come much more slowly, and students may need some help in relating "Protocols" to their lives. They may misread the poem accepting the children's voices as stating literal truth rather than truth seen through a limited and unsure vision.

Three anthologies of particular interest to young people are Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders and Hugh Smith's *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle And Other Modern Verse*, the same editors' *Some Hoystocks Don't Even Hove Any Needle And Other Complete Modern Poems*, and a collection of poems by young people, *Mad Sad & Glad*.<sup>17</sup>

**THE TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY IN GETTING RESPONSES**  
If the reading of a poem or a short story or the viewing of a short film is to stimulate students' interest, it will likely be because the teacher is willing to spend more time listening to the students than talking. Barrett John Mandel's six do's and five never's were intended to help college teachers implement student response but they are worth consideration by secondary English teachers.

- 1 I listen until I hear
- 2 I look until I see
- 3 I psychologically support and encourage any signs of intellectual and emotional energy
- 4 I encourage interaction among students
- 5 I advise, but never force or require
- 6 I try to be intellectually and emotionally honest and accessible
- 1 Never call on anybody who has not volunteered
- 2 Never correct an interpretation
- 3 Never berate students for lack of knowledge understanding or hard work
- 4 Never use lecture as the dominant approach
- 5 Never require specific projects at specific times<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Both *Reflections* and *Some Hoystocks* were published by Scott Foresman the first in 1966 and the latter in 1969. *Mad Sad & Glad* was published in 1970 by Scholastic Book Services.

A teacher may try a poem or short story only to be met by a number of responses, all quite different: Can the teacher do anything with so many unique responses? Is that all there is to his job, simply getting responses out in the open and perhaps cataloguing or categorizing them? Alan C. Purves answers that question by noting

There is a great deal for the teacher to do:

The teacher must provide each student with as many different works as possible.

The teacher must encourage each student to respond as fully as he is able.

The teacher must encourage the student to understand why he responds as he does.

The teacher must encourage the student to respond to as many works as possible.

The teacher must encourage the student to tolerate responses that differ from his.

The teacher must encourage students to explore their areas of agreement and disagreement.<sup>19</sup>

Response to literature can often lead to responses in other areas.<sup>20</sup> One student might respond to Jarrell's poem by creating a collage while another might want to dig into histories or encyclopedias to find more about German persecution of minorities during World War II. Other students might want to produce a slide-tape presentation for the entire class, write a poem, make a film, write autobiographically or critically, or write about music that might serve as a background for another reading of the poem. Oral responses will differ from student to student and class to class. Some literature evokes silence. Students may never wish to respond openly to it, but they might respond through other forms. Teachers often assume that silence following a poem, short story, or film means that it had no effect or that the students were bored. If that is sometimes true, it is also sometimes true that some things hit students very hard, and it is an unfortunate truth that the closer the hit, the slower all of us are to verbalize openly about it. Yevtushenko's poem is much more likely to lead to fast, open, and perhaps vociferous response than is Jarrell's.

In the golden days of the happy past, teachers may have done a better job of teaching the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arith-

18. "Teaching Without Judging," *College English* 34 (Feb. 1973): 623-24.

19. *How Porcupines Make Love: Notes on a Response-Centered Curriculum* (Lexington, Mass.: Xerox, 1972), p. 37.

20. The most discriminating list of the elements in student responses is to be found in Alan C. Purves and Victoria Rippere's *Elements of Writing about a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1968), especially pp. 9-46.

metic as so many present day critics claim. But we have no real evidence to suggest that those earlier teachers produced a massive number of eager life long readers. Therefore teachers might consider trying a response centered literature program. It has never helped students much when the teacher acted as the authority. If the teacher must be the rigid arbiter of taste or the final word in interpretation his students may become his disciples but they can never become readers independent of his wisdom. The purpose of reading literature as is the purpose of education generally is to help and free not to impede and enslave. And a response centered literature program can lead to freedom and education.

### RESPONDING CRITICALLY TO LITERATURE

Although a teacher must be concerned with creating a class atmosphere where students feel free to respond honestly to any literary work, sooner or later he will want to take his students past the immediate-response stage in which the basic questions they will need to answer are: What is my response? and Why do I respond that way? The teacher will hope to introduce one further question: What does the author do to make me respond this way? While the teacher may not wish to produce literary critics he will want students to become more and more critical of the reading they do in or out of English class. Analytical and critical growth may come slowly but the teacher acting compassionately and cautiously can help that growth.

**BEGINNING WHERE STUDENTS ARE** The educational cliché begin where students are and then take them someplace holds true with literary criticism. A teacher should begin with something known and comfortable to his students. Plot is a good and obvious place to begin. Whatever readers may think about characterization or style they care about plot. Indeed the first question almost anyone asks about fiction is: What is it about?

**HELPING STUDENTS TO GO FURTHER** The many elements of any literary work as those of any art form are intertwined and impossible to separate entirely but alone or with slight teacher direction students can look carefully at some aspects of plot or form. If such a look will help to make the story play or poem more understandable interesting and relevant. Students ignore the time and place of Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown* at the expense of the entire story. Time and place or rather the lack of attention to time and place will significantly affect Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*.

If questions like those given below sound all too reminiscent of the study questions in all too many high school literature anthologies

that does not diminish their importance so much as it questions their form. Teachers must have these questions in mind, although whether they will ever use them, in this form or another, will depend entirely on the direction and excitement of a particular discussion.

Where does the story take place? What time of day is it? What season? What year or approximate year? Are there particular weather conditions—sun, storm, gloom, humidity, chill, wind—that might influence the atmosphere of the story? (Does a tragic death occur on a bright cloudless day when all should be right with the world, as in Robert Frost's 'Out, Out—'?) What is the situation at the time the action begins? Is there some vital background information given? Does the setting act only as a reinforcement for what develops, or does it influence or directly affect what happens? Could the story have occurred in a different place and time or did it have to have this setting (as perhaps in a story like 'The Most Dangerous Game' by Richard Connell or a novel like William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*)? Does the setting foreshadow the action (as in both the stories just mentioned)?

What are the conflicts in the story? These may be both internal and external, conflicts such as that between a character's conscience and his feeling of duty, or those between two characters such as a father and his son. A person may struggle against society, as did Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, or he may struggle against nature (see Jack London's 'To Build a Fire'), or against the gods or fate (*Oedipus Rex*).

From what point of view is the story seen, and how does that point of view affect the story? Does the reader see events through the eyes of an outside observer, a character, through those of the first person narrator, or does the author choose to be omniscient, entering each character's mind and at the same time adding the comments of an outside observer? What advantages and disadvantages does the chosen point of view have? What would have happened to the story had it been told from a different point of view?

Characters in the story may be fully developed into living, breathing people, they may be flat or typed, exemplifying only the particular aspect of character the author wants to emphasize. The characters may be portrayed as representatives of universal types. Students need to analyze how each character is described: what he says, what others say about him, how he interacts with others in the story, why he behaves as he does, what motivates him either to act or not to act. Key words will soon set a pattern for each character. Once the character is set, does he behave according to expectation? If not, why? Can what he does be explained by some unusual set of circumstances? Does the reader identify with and care what happens to the characters?

The theme of a work of literature may be fairly obvious or quite obscure. Therefore less experienced readers should begin with a selection in which theme is easily determined through a series of well directed questions. If students consider the setting, the conflict, the characters, and what happens in the story and why, they should finally ask: So what is the purpose of all this? Why has the author told this particular story in this particular manner with this particular sequence or form? Is he making a statement about something? If so, what is he saying about it?

Teaching students to observe characteristics of an author's style is sometimes helpful in developing their understanding. Elements to be considered in the author's manner of writing include the length and arrangement of sentences and paragraphs, the amount of description and dialogue, the form or shape of the selection—it begins here, is here at the middle, and here at the end—the diction (formal, informal), the figures of speech, recurring motifs, use of symbolism, his structural technique (stream of consciousness, chronological narrative, incidental flashback), and what point of view is chosen.

**ILLUSTRATING CRITICAL READING** Students will learn more about the process of critical examination and analysis if the teacher frequently illustrates how it is done and what understanding and enjoyment might result from it. The literature examined does not need to be long; indeed, the shorter the work, the easier it is to handle within a short class period. The teacher might consider using a story such as Leonard Q. Ross' *The Cemetery Path*.

### THE CEMETERY PATH

- 1 Ivan was a timid little man. The villagers called him Pigeon or sometimes Chicken. Every night Ivan stopped in at the bar near the village cemetery. Then he walked a mile around the cemetery to get to his lonely shack on the other side. The path through the cemetery would save him many minutes. But he had never taken it—not even the full light of the moon.
- 2 Late one snowy, windy night a young lieutenant in the bar said to Ivan: You are a pigeon, Ivan. You'll walk around the cemetery in this cold—but you won't dare cross it.
- 3 Ivan said: The cemetery is nothing but earth like all the earth.
- 4 The lieutenant said: Then cross the cemetery tonight, Ivan, and I will give you five gold rubles.
- 5 Maybe it was the liquor. Maybe it was the temptation of the money. No one ever knew why, but Ivan agreed to cross the cemetery.
- 6 The people in the bar couldn't believe it. The lieutenant winked to the men. Then he took his sword. Here Ivan. When you get to the middle of the cemetery, in front of the biggest tomb, stick the sword into the ground. In the morning we shall go there. And if the

sword is in the ground—five gold rubles for you " Ivan took the sword The men drank a toast and laughed at Ivan

7 The wind howled around Ivan as he closed the door of the bar The cold was as sharp as a knife Ivan buttoned his long coat, which almost touched the ground He could hear the lieutenant's voice, louder than the rest, yelling after him "Five rubles, Pigeon, if you live!"

8 Ivan pushed the cemetery gate open The darkness was terrible He was afraid The wind was cruel and the sword was like ice in his hands Ivan shivered under the long thick coat and started to run toward the middle of the cemetery

9 He saw the large tomb He kneeled cold and afraid He drove the sword between his knees into the hard ground

10 Ivan started to get up from his knees, but he could not move Something held him Ivan pulled and tugged and tried to get away but something still would not let him move forward Ivan cried out in the darkness, 'Oh God, help me! Help me! Please help me!' Still he could not move He cried out again in terror Then he made senseless noises

11 The next morning, they found Ivan on the ground in front of the largest tomb in the middle of the cemetery His face was that of a man killed by some terrible horror And the lieutenant's sword was in the ground where Ivan had pounded it—through the back of his long coat

This is a compact, tightly-woven story about a single incident in the life of a frightened little man The scene is described from the point of view of a third person, giving the reader a sense of objectivity The narrator, however, immediately arouses the reader's sympathy for Ivan by showing how easily he is overcome by fear and by creating the typical, loud mouth braggart, bully, and show-off as Ivan's antagonist Everyone in the bar taunts Ivan, thus making the reader want to protect Ivan against the crowd The fact that Ivan lives all alone in a shack away from the village further enforces the sense of loneliness that wraps itself around him

Although the reader is not told the name of the little village, clues such as the name Ivan, the five gold rubles, and the bitterly cold weather lead the reader to conclude that the incident occurred in a small village somewhere in Russia Ivan's fear is transmitted to the reader in large part by this setting The focal point is the cemetery—a place in direct contrast to the warmth, laughter, friendliness, and cheer of the bar from which Ivan emerges The night is 'snowy,' 'windy,' and 'cold' In paragraph seven, the wind howled," the "cold was as sharp as a knife," and Ivan wraps his body more tightly in his long coat (the key to the ending), and in the next paragraph the "darkness was terrible," the "wind was cruel," and the sword became "ice" in his hands All of nature seems aimed against Ivan The con-

crete images used in the figures of speech bring the abstract ideas directly to the reader's senses of sight, touch, and hearing

The characters of Ivan and the young lieutenant (who remains nameless and thus universal) are not developed. However, proof that Ivan is not merely "a timid little man" is given by the fact that the villagers all call him "Pigeon" or "Chicken." Ross allows the reader to use his own imagination as to what motivates this frightened little man to accept the lieutenant's dare. Was it because he had drunk too much and didn't realize what he was saying? Did the drink give him a kind of bravado he had not previously known? Was the money that great a temptation? Had Ivan reached his breaking point? Was he unable to bear one more taunt from the villagers?

The lieutenant is a bully, he dares a man he knows is weak and frightened—and he throws in five gold rubles to make the dare more colorful in the villagers' eyes and more tempting to Ivan. This man has no sympathy, understanding or sensitivity for others, he thinks only of enlarging his own image in the eyes of his fellows. In thoughtlessly and impulsively making his dare, he has insured that Ivan must undergo complete terror, must do the thing that he fears most. Ivan's weak attempt to convince himself that the cemetery is simply "earth like all other earth" only makes him more pitied.

The plot is fairly simple. Ivan is given a challenge, he accepts it, a toast is drunk, and he goes alone into the cemetery and drives the sword into the ground in front of the largest tomb. Ah! The reader rejoices that his "timid little man" has won. But there's that ironic twist. The "timid little man" cannot win. In his haste, he drives the sword through his coat, pinning himself to the spot. He is too terrified to realize what has happened and to release himself, and he dies before morning. Will this teach the bully and the villagers (who by their compliance are also bullies) a lesson? The reader is left to wonder.

The theme of man's inhumanity is thus neatly caught in one brief incident, its impact graphically drawn in eleven short paragraphs. The use of short, simple sentences arranged with normal word order during the moments of greatest tension serves to reinforce the staccato feeling of the fearful, rapid, little actions made by the simple, little, and timid Ivan.

Thus we see theme, plot, setting, character, and diction all working together—inseparably—each a part of the whole greater than the sum of its parts. By ending the story with Ivan's death rather than his victory, the author enlarges his theme from that of man's inhumanity to include the cruel indifference of nature toward the weak.

Out of Ivan's inner conflict, his conflict with the villagers, and the conflict of nature and man from which "Cemetery Path" is built come its themes. Hence, an examination of those conflicts becomes an important tool to understanding the total meaning of the work.



**ANALYZING PASSAGES** One reading skill that might be taught and is too often ignored is that of analyzing passages, particularly the opening and closing portions of a literary work

In selecting what is to be analyzed, the reader should be aware of the diction, particularly of figures of speech, what is revealed about the setting or background what he can learn about any of the characters, whether the passage in some clear way advances the plot, what the purpose of the passage is, and what effects diction and sentence and paragraph arrangements produce

To illustrate analysis of the opening and the closing segments of a short novel, the class might examine Stephen Crane's *The Monster*, sections I and XXIV

Section I introduces us first to little Jimmy Trescott and to his father, the doctor, through a quietly dramatic incident in the garden of their home The doctor is mowing the lawn—"shaving" it "as if it were a priest's chin" Here the reader learns about the manner in which the doctor cares for his lawn and is told that the doctor has worked hard and faithfully at it during all the evenings of the summer From it he can infer that the doctor cares about living things and nurtures them, that he likes neatness and order, that he is persistent, determined, and accomplishes what he sets out to do While he mows, Jimmy is playing train Carried away in his role as train engineer, Jimmy destroys a peony (Why does Crane select this particular verb?) His immediate reaction is to look guiltily toward his father whose back is turned to what has happened A paragraph is devoted to Jimmy's vain attempt to restore the broken flower At last Jimmy steels himself and calls his father's attention to the accident He cannot bring himself to tell his father what he has done, but simply points it out—the boy is rendered speechless by an accident that to most readers would be of minor significance It takes several paragraphs for the doctor even to discover what Jimmy is trying to say, and even then he "was obliged to go forward alone" The doctor is soft-spoken and not harsh in punishing his son He simply tells him not to play train any more that day The last paragraph states the relationship of father and son "During the delivery of the judgment the child had not faced his father, and afterward he went away with his head lowered shuffling his feet" The entire scene not only sets the character of the doctor but also the manner in which others react to him In addition, it foreshadows the real destruction—that of Henry Johnson—to come

Section XXIV, the final scene of the short novel occurs in winter and hence is inside the house that has been rebuilt following a fire rather than outdoors Jimmy is looking "painfully" at a book of jungle animals The reader follows the doctor into a little drawing room where his wife is sitting in near darkness the only light reflected as a "dull red" from the window panes coming from the fire in the

stove. A small table is burdened with cups and plates of uncut tea cakes. The doctor's wife, Grace, is softly crying. It is her day to receive, and just one lady has come to call. The doctor counts over and over the fifteen cups sitting on the little table. As the two sit there, the wind is whining, the snow beating, the coal in the stove makes a crumbling sound, and the four dull red panes suddenly become crimson in color. Does this concluding scene tell the reader what the author chooses not to tell? Is the doctor's character consistent with what we saw at the beginning of the story? Why doesn't Crane tell the reader what happens? Has the doctor, by making a moral choice, disregarded his family's feelings and lives? What was his real motivation in that choice? What things have happened and changed since the opening scene? What are the meanings of those changes?

These are some of the kinds of questions that can be asked during a passage analysis. Looking carefully at the passage and asking probing questions about it not only gives the reader insight into the work as a whole but also helps him to appreciate and to see the writer's skill. The reader can also ask himself such questions as: Is this what would happen in real life? Have I known people like this? Have I learned anything about what to expect or how to behave in certain kinds of situations? Does the outcome of a situation depend on the kinds of personalities involved? Why is this true or when is it true?

**DISCUSSING LITERATURE** Once students have arrived at a greater understanding and appreciation of literature, the teacher's major responsibility is to give them as many kinds of reading experiences as possible at increasing levels of complexity. For students who have not grasped certain handles or ideas that will help them to approach and enter literature, the teacher will need to individualize his teaching and reteach his ideas. This will be beneficial to the entire class occasionally, since young people do need reinforcement in learning.

The key to stimulating the discussion of literature lies entirely in the line of questioning used by the teacher as leader. He must have planned a series of discussion provoking questions prior to the group's meeting, but he must also be alert and listen to what his students' responses are so that he can key other questions to them. In short, the larger part of good questioning involves good listening. A discussion can very well go in a different direction from any the teacher has thought of, and it is important that he be alert to the direction of student response and be alert to the unhappy fact that sometimes the discussion may be heading toward a dead end or toward no place at all. Teachers should encourage students to keep referring back to the literature that forms the base of their discussion and to avoid going off on tangents totally unrelated to it. If a student makes a judg-

ment that seems totally unrelated to the topic, the teacher should ask a tactful question that might open the student's eyes or make him question his own words. No one, teacher or student, should flatly indicate the error or ridicule his ideas or judgment. Getting students to offer any response at all is often a touch-and-go situation at best, and allowing anyone to kill a discussion through ridicule will hurt everyone involved as well as the literature the teacher is trying to bring to life.

Once the proper climate is established, it is the teacher's prime concern and responsibility to ask questions that stimulate thought and provide discussion—not questions that demand a particular right answer. Discussion means inquiry or examination, and this is precisely what should take place in a group discussion. If it does not, students may be turned off by literature and may tune out. It's important for the teacher to maintain the role of questioner and listener throughout the discussion. It is not his role to hand down his own judgments, but rather to provoke his students to do their own thinking and their own judging. He should try to pull out as many differing opinions as actually exist so the entire group can evaluate them and make individual judgments based on the pool of ideas and comments. If a teacher finds his students asking questions that demand his opinion, he should turn the question back to the group or to particular members and get their responses.

If the teacher feels students are not really listening to each other, he can emulate Carl Rogers' technique mentioned earlier and can request each student who responds to someone else to first restate what the previous speaker had said—to that person's satisfaction—before he gives his own view. Although this slows down the flow of ideas, students may indeed listen and think about what is being said.

It may be useful at this point to examine some specific works a teacher or his students may have read and illustrate through them the kinds of questions the teacher might ask to stimulate student response and discussion.

S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* can be seen as a story of three orphaned brothers trying to make it on their own, of life in a crowded city area and the creed of "survival of the fittest" that accompanies it, of the similarities and differences in different social sets, or of gang fights and murder and death and of love for others and an appreciation for what life can offer for those who are willing to search and work for it.

1. What is a general definition of the word "outsider"?
2. Who or what are the "outsiders" in this book?
3. Why are they outsiders? What are they outside of?
4. In what ways is Ponyboy both an outsider and an insider?

- 5 Is it a bad thing or a good thing to be an outsider? Why or why not? Under what conditions?
- 6 On what basis are the various gangs in *The Outsiders* formed? Why?
- 7 Why are Ponyboy and Darry unable to communicate?
- 8 Is Johnny justified in killing Bob? Why is Johnny the one who kills?
- 9 Why does the author have Ponyboy and Cherry become friends?
- 10 Why is the image of watching the sunset repeated in the novel?
- 11 What is the meaning of Frost's *Nothing Gold Can Stay*?
- 12 What is the importance of this poem to Johnny and Ponyboy?
- 13 Why is Johnny's last message to Ponyboy to remember Frost's poem?
- 14 In what way does Johnny regard Ponyboy as being gold?
- 15 Is it possible that Ponyboy can stay gold?
- 16 In what ways does Ponyboy change in the novel?
- 17 Do any of the other characters change?
- 18 In what ways does Ponyboy remain the same?
- 19 What is accomplished by having the story written as an English assignment?
- 20 Why is the story told from Ponyboy's point of view rather than say Darry's or Sodapop's or from that of a third person?
- 21 What statements about life does the author seem to be making?

Paul Zindel's *The Pigman* is the story of two lonely teenagers who make friends with an equally lonely old man. The three of them have fun, good times, and companionship as long as they play games, but as soon as they begin to tell the truth and face reality, tragedy in the form of the old man's death occurs.

- 1 Why is the story told from two points of view?
- 2 What do you learn about John and Lorraine from the oath at the beginning of the novel?
- 3 What attitude toward adults in general is presented? Toward parents? Toward teachers? Policemen?
- 4 Why is the Pigman different from other adults? Can we draw a conclusion from this?
- 5 What does the Pigman have in common with John and Lorraine?
- 6 Why are all of John and Lorraine's friends misfits?
- 7 Why does Lorraine feel that she and John are guilty of the Pigman's murder?
- 8 How are games used as an integral part of the novel?
- 9 How is animal imagery used? Why is the pig used to symbolize the man who befriends John and Lorraine? Why are Mr. Pignati's pigs artificial? Why does the room full of pigs seem almost sacred to John and Lorraine? Why does Mr. Pignati's first pig have

- an ugly smile? Why is Mr Pignati's best friend an ugly baboon? Why is the zoo a favorite place of Mr Pignati's?
- 10 Reread the last two pages. What is meant by 'trespassing'? How have John and Lorraine trespassed? In what way has the Pigman trespassed? What is meant by "there was no place to hide"? What is meant by baboons 'build their own cages,' and in what way does John apply the concept to people? What is meant by 'he [the Pigman] took his children with him'?
  - 11 What attitude toward life does the book finally seem to express?
  - 12 What are the themes of the novel, and how do the characters, the action, and the imagery all express them?

In Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, the question of whether there is a higher law than man's arises when Billy Budd, a symbol of young innocence and purity, in sudden and to all appearances justifiable anger strikes and kills a superior officer on board ship. The inconsistencies and injustices of the law of man suddenly transform the life of Billy the 'Peacemaker' into a nightmare of an unjust death penalty.

- 1 What purpose is served by the "Preface"?
- 2 What is the image we first get of Billy? Why is he described as "welkin eyed"? In what ways is Billy a Christ figure? Cite as many examples of textual evidence of this as you can. Why is his one weakness a sudden shortness of temper? Why is his one physical weakness that of stuttering? In what ways do others react to him? (Use examples presented by as many specific characters as you can find.)
- 3 Why is Billy's new ship named the *Indomitable*?
- 4 What kind of man is represented by Captain Vere?
- 5 Why is this type selected for this particular role?
- 6 How would you characterize John Claggart?
- 7 What purpose does old Dansker serve?
- 8 What is meant by 'It [civilization] folds itself in the mantle of respectability'? How does this statement relate to the themes of the novel?
- 9 What is the conflict of good and evil that is represented? In what ways is this conflict shown?
- 10 What is meant by the quotation

The sailor is frankness the landsman is finesse. Life is not a game with the sailor demanding the long head no intricate game of chess where few moves are made in straight forwardness and ends are attained by indirection an oblique tedious barren game hardly worth that poor candle burnt out in playing it.

Why does the story involve the sea and ships and sailors rather than landmen?

- 11 What is the significance of Captain Vere's exclamation "Struck

- dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang! What does this reveal about the character of Vere?
- 12 What is the conflict between expediency and the 'ultimate' within Captain Vere?
  - 13 Why is Billy's "intent or non-intent . . . nothing to the purpose"? Is it the act itself or the motivation that should be judged? In whose view?
  - 14 Why does Melville write the 'Digression'? What purpose does it serve? Is he committed to have a digression because he has a preface? Why or why not?

Ira Levin's *Dr. Cook's Garden* a drama of modern times set in a small New England town, portrays the local family doctor who becomes tempted by the power of his position and gradually comes to play the role of a god in the community. Ironically, he is found out by the young man he has "adopted" as the one to follow in his footsteps and to take over his practice.

- 1 In what ways is the garden metaphor appropriate? At what point does the metaphor end? What is ironic about the metaphor?
- 2 Is Dr. Cook justified in his "removal" of any of the townspeople (take them separately)? How does he rationalize his actions? What are his real motivations? What evidence can you cite that he has become a kind of god?
- 3 Why does the author have Jim's father be Dr. Cook's first "removal"?
- 4 Does Jim have to lie to Dr. Cook to save himself?
- 5 What motivates him to withhold Doc's medicine?
- 6 Is he justified in "allowing Doc to die"?
- 7 What will happen to Jim now?
- 8 Discuss the question of euthanasia. Who is "qualified" to judge whether the act itself is justified and, if it is then who should judge under what circumstances it should occur? Should men be afraid to take this kind of responsibility?

Stephen Crane's *The Monster* is a short novel in which a young Negro rescues his master's young son when the family home catches on fire. The Negro, Henry Johnson, is burned so severely he is at first reported dead, he survives although he is left literally faceless and becomes the town horror. His mind is also apparently affected in some way, as he remembers nothing of the tragedy and seems capable of only simple thinking. Because he is so disfigured the townspeople want him "taken away," but Dr. Trescott, Henry's master, insists on caring for Henry because, as he says, the man saved his only son's life and this is the least the doctor can do to repay his debt. The questions of euthanasia and of what to do with physical and mental "misfits" are brought out.

- 1 Who or what is 'the monster'?
- 2 Define the word
- 3 Is the fact that Henry is a Negro significant?
- 4 Why doesn't Martha Goodwin call Henry a monster?
- 5 Why doesn't the doctor regard him as a monster?
- 6 What are the various reactions of other townspeople?
- 7 What changes our image of Henry from the first time we see him to the last?
- 8 How is the fire itself shown to be a monster?
- 9 How does the town become a monster?
- 10 What truly motivates the doctor to act as he does?
- 11 Is he being selfish in his decision?
- 12 Why does Crane write this short novel as a series of scenes or incidents?
- 13 How does the setting reinforce the action and the themes of the novel?
- 14 To what previous tea party can the final scene be compared?
- 15 Why does Judge Hagenthorpe find it necessary to rub the head of his cane in order to think clearly?
- 16 Why are the characters not fully developed?

## SOME PROBLEM AREAS IN TEACHING LITERATURE

**MINORITY LITERATURE** Although elective curricula have brought minority literature into some English classrooms, it deserves to be included in all of them. A course entitled American Literature which omits it misleads at best and lies at worst about the nature and content of American writing. Black, Chicano and Indian poets of high quality are not difficult to find, nor are dramatists or novelists. A selection of American essays which ignores James Baldwin or Vine Deloria is myopic and dangerous, it can hardly pretend to speak broadly of America and Americans' needs, interests, and passions.

The teacher convinced that he should add minority writers to his literature curriculum must choose his material on the basis of adolescent appeal and excellence in writing, the same standards he would use in judging any prospective work. The English teacher who questions whether black or Chicano or Indian poetry (or essays or short stories or novels) should be included in his curriculum has usually read very little minority literature. A rapid survey of several anthologies would acquaint him with the vast amount of material available much of it excellent.<sup>21</sup>

21 A four volume set recently published by Houghton Mifflin should serve as an introduction, particularly William Adams *Afro American Authors*, Natachee Scott Momaday *American Indian Authors* and Americo and Raymond Paredes

A teacher determining what minority novels to consider for his class will be embarrassed by the riches available. Black novels as dissimilar as Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Gordon Parks' *The Learning Tree*, Jean Toomer's *Cone*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Warren Miller's *The Cool World*, John Williams' *The Man Who Cried*, I Am Junius Edwards' *If We Must Die*, Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl*, Brownstones, John Killens' *And Then We Heard the Thunder*, Ann Fairbairn's *Five Smooth Stones*, Owen Dodson's *When Trees Were Green*, and Ann Petry's *The Street* could be used with many mature students. Younger and less sophisticated students might benefit from reading adolescent novels such as Robert Lipsyte's *The Contender*, Virginia Hamilton's *Zeely*, Lorenz Craham's *Whose Town?*, Dorothy Sterling's *Mary Jone*, or June Jordan's *His Own Where*. Chicano authors have brought Chicano life alive in novels like Richard Vesquez' *Chicano*, Raymond Barrio's *The Plum Plum Pickers*, Mariano Azuela's *The Underdogs*, and Jose Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho*. Indian novels, most of them written by non-Indians, which have attempted to present an honest portrayal of Indian life and philosophy include Hal Borland's *When the Legends Die*, Frank Waters' *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, Benjamin Capps' *A Woman of the People*, Howard Fast's *The Last Frontier*, Dan Cushman's *Stoy Away*, Joe Charles McNichols' *Crazy Weather*, Thomas Falla's *The Ordeal of Running Standing*, Mari Sandoz' *Cheyenne Autumn*, and N. Scott Momaday's *A House Made of Down*. Since Indian literature seems in some perverse way to be more foreign to English teachers than the literature of any other minority, they may gain considerable insight into Indian ways, beliefs, and cultures by reading three books: T. C. McLuhan's *Touch the Earth: A Self Portrait of Indian Existence* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), a collection of statements, prayers, and speeches by Indians, most of them related to the miserable relationships between them and white

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Mexican American Authors. A few representative anthologies of black literature are Abraham Chapman's *Black Voices: An Anthology of Afro American Literature* (New York: New American Library, 1968), Bradford Chambers and Rebecca Moon's *Right On! An Anthology of Black Literature* (New York: New American Library, 1970), Dudley Randall's *The Black Poets* (New York: Bantam, 1971), and Alan Lomax and Raoul Abdul's *3000 Years of Black Poetry* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1970). An inexpensive anthology is *Puerto Rican Poets* (New York: Bantam, 1972). Two helpful anthologies of Chicano literature are Aztlán: *An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York: Vintage, 1972), and Philip D. Ortego's *We Are Chicanos: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York: Washington Square, 1973). Three helpful collections of Indian literature are Margot Astor's *American Indian Prose and Poetry* (New York: Capricorn, 1948), Shirley Hill Witt and Stan Steiner's *The Way: An Anthology of American Indian Literature* (New York: Vintage, 1972), and Virginia I. Armstrong's *I Have Spoken: American History Through the Voices of the Indians* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972).



men N Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (New York Ballantine, 1970), telling of the Kiowa Indians and their beliefs and hopes, and Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins An Indian Manifesto* (New York Avon, 1969), a bitter and witty censure of the white man."

English teachers venturing for the first time into minority literature must be aware that critical opinion by minority members will vary greatly. The teacher will likely not be surprised that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has come under attack by many blacks. He may be slightly more surprised to discover that John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* is frequently thought to be patronizing. He may be astounded to learn that many blacks did not like either William Armstrong's adolescent novel *Souder* or its filmed version. Teenagers too, may object to the submissiveness of the black father when taken off to jail by the white sheriff. However, Margaret Ronan has commented:

The teenager didn't take into account (1) the fact that the film takes place in the early '30s, (2) that the sheriff was armed and the father wasn't, (3) that if the father had resisted, he would have been beaten up and his family would have gained nothing.

"Some of our young are so hung up on fantasy blacks that they can't recognize the facts of black experience when they see them," says Paul Winfield [the actor who played the father]. "We owe it to our parents and grandparents to make accurate movies of their lives and struggles. The fight for civil rights didn't begin in the late '50s with the Montgomery bus boycott or in the '60s with the freedom riders. It began with the frustrations of our parents and grandparents. That's why a film like *Souder* is important and necessary. Its happenings are part of black history, and black audiences need that. The parents in *Souder*, who sacrificed to send their son to school, were laying the foundation for the black student who sat in at a 'White Only' restaurant in the '60s and who faced the hoses, dogs, and guns of that period."

Should racial and ethnic literature be reserved for special elective courses or should such courses be eliminated and the literature brought into the regular English curriculum? Obviously specialized

22 Some helpful bibliographies for English teachers include Barbara Dodds, *Negro Literature for High School Students* (Champaign Ill. NCTE, 1968); Charles Rollins, *We Build Together* (Urbana Ill. NCTE, 1967); "Southwestern Literature and Culture in the English Classroom," the entire issue of the April 1971 *Arizona English Bulletin*; and "Portraits: The Literature of Minorities," published by the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Office.

23 Margaret Ronan, "Black Is Beautiful at the Box Office," *Scholastic Voice* 53 (30 Apr. 1973): 9.

courses and inclusion in more conventional English classes are simultaneously possible but unhappily in some schools the establishment of minority literature classes has served as another effective means of segregating the literature. Such classes were almost inevitable when teachers first became aware of the literature so long ignored and at the time these classes at least brought the literature into the schools. But now the question remains. If the province of literature is to alert all students to man's dilemmas, joys and tragedies, then should not the province of the English class be to read good literature exposing every man's dilemmas, joys and tragedies whenever and wherever they occur? Maybe more important, white teachers aware of minority literature classes in their schools may think they can stick to traditional literature, barring a token poem or two by some black writer when a case could easily be made that the students who most urgently need a course in minority literature are those teachers' students.

### LITERATURE WRITTEN FOR THE ADOLESCENT

For better than seventy years writers have written material specifically directed to an adolescent audience. Although such literature has a long heritage and a wide number of readers, it also has a large number of critics and detractors. A recent study of the English curriculum made such an attack:

Claims are frequently advanced for the use of the so-called junior books, a literature of adolescence, on the ground that they ease the young reader into a frame of mind in which he will be ready to tackle something stronger, harder, more adult. The Commission has serious doubts that it does anything of the sort. For classes in remedial reading to resort to such books may be necessary, but to make them a considerable part of the curriculum for most students is to subvert the purposes for which literature is included in the first place. In the high school years the aim should be not to find the students' level so much as to raise it, and such books rarely elevate.<sup>24</sup>

Why should the English teacher spend time reading material which admittedly does not equal *Walden* or *Moby Dick* or *Catcher in the Rye*, and which is admittedly not adult literature?

If teachers insist on criticizing adolescent literature, they should attack from knowledge, not ignorance. They should do what they rightfully ask students to do: read the material. Some adolescent literature contains hack writing, some is literary garbage, and some is written about a problem rather than people, but the same criticisms

24. The Commission on English, *Freedom and Discipline in English* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1963), p. 42.

can be leveled at much literature written for adults. The real wonder of adolescent literature is not how much is badly written but rather how much is well written. Books as different as S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*, Maia Wojciechowska's *A Single Light*, John Tunis' *His Enemy, His Friend*, Elizabeth Speare's *The Bronze Bow*, John Neufeld's *Twink*, Kin Platt's *Hey, Dummy*, Mildred Lee's *The Skating Rink*, Irene Hunt's *No Promises in the Wind*, Mary Stolz' *A Love, or a Season and Pray Love, Remember*, Betsy Byers' *The Summer of the Swans*, and Paul Annixter's *Swiftwater*, to name only a very few, deserve serious consideration by teachers, consideration that can only come with reading.

Teachers should know adolescent literature because students already know it and read it widely. If an English teacher is to know his students and where they are, he must also know the kind of books they read. Much adolescent literature that students read concerns problems they have right now, and the teacher should be aware how valuable a bibliotherapeutic tool adolescent literature can be if it is properly handled.

Adolescent literature can be used in the classroom, particularly in thematic units or free reading. One of the chief virtues of thematic units is that students can read material they like related to the central theme or question. Although some adolescent literature provides superficial answers to universal questions, even a superficial answer can offer a starting point for thought and discussion, and it is far better than no starting point at all. If free reading is taken seriously by both teacher and students, students will be allowed to read what they want as they want it. If the teacher disapproves of adolescent literature or forbids students to read it, free reading will be impossible. More important, allowing students to read adolescent literature will give the teacher a good idea of what the student likes and what the teacher might recommend for the next reading the student might like to try.

If all students were treated with respect and love, were surrounded by many cultural artifacts and had parents who loved to read and read to their children, then there might be limited reason for using adolescent literature in the classroom. Unhappily, some adolescents do not have this background. These students often do not look upon reading as a joy forever, much less a pleasure right now. If the teacher is concerned about these students, he may decide that adolescent literature does have a place in the world and a most valuable place in the English classroom.

**RELUCTANT READERS** Some students, usually boys, resent any attempts to interest them in reading in English class. They are often grouped under the euphemistic label "reluctant readers," a grouping

both unfair since it often becomes a self fulfilling prophecy and inaccurate since these students frequently have little in common save their sex and their dislike of reading and English class

The causes of their ailment may be more difficult to determine than its possible cure. What can the English teacher do? Simply and briefly put he can try to establish a class atmosphere where students almost always succeed where praise is common where students are accepted and where reluctant students might possibly just possibly care to try to read once more. To do this he can use thematic units or free reading where materials of many kinds and many levels of sophistication and difficulty are openly available to students.<sup>25</sup> The teacher can supply his students with the freedom and time to read and look at classics and best sellers and literature specifically aimed at adolescents and minorities. He can supply his reluctant readers with science fiction westerns mysteries humor and adventure. He can read stories aloud and he can occasionally tickle and frustrate students by reading most of an exciting tale such as Richard Connell's

The Most Dangerous Game and Carl Stephenson's *Leiningen Versus the Ants* and asking them to read the rest. He can provide browsing time and space to look at catalogues of all sorts radio supplies motorcycles carpenter tools whatever. In short the teacher can care and show he cares by finding materials and techniques that might work with his most reluctant and sometimes his most honest students.

An English teacher's first job is not to raise or change his students' reading interests but to find them. Before reading enthusiasm must come initial contact with likeable materials. The teacher who works to make that contact possible and nourish it stands some chance of raising taste in reading. He may also be the only hope a reluctant reader has.

**CENSORSHIP** Teachers can safely assume that sometime in their teaching they will be likely to encounter someone—parents or administrators—who will disapprove of some literature they have recommended or used. One obvious way to avoid any criticism is to use nothing that would be open to attack but that method is cowardly and

25 The comments by Daniel Fader *Hooked on Books: Program and Proof* (New York: Berkley, 1968) are helpful to any teacher working with reluctant readers, as are Fader's remarks in *The Naked Children* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) remarks optimistic about young people but cynical about schools. Two valuable books annotating titles of interest to reluctant readers are Marian F. White, ed., *High Interest—Easy Reading for Juniors and Senior High School Students* (New York: Citation, 1972) and Virginia M. Reid, ed., *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1972).

ineffective Almost any work of literature is potentially open to attack by someone, somewhere, sometime, for some reason A teacher is likely to assume that books like Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, or Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* are prone to attack, but many others have been censored, books as different as the following:

Classics Plato's *Republic*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

Modern Literature Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, Clarke's *The Ox-Bow Incident*, Knowles' *A Separate Peace*

Adolescent Literature Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Zindel's *The Pigman*, Hentoff's *I'm Really Drogged But Nothing Gets Me Down*, Renvoize's *A Wild Thing*

Additionally, films and newspapers and magazines have been increasingly censored

Films *The Bond*, *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, *Skater Dater*, *The Lottery*, *Star Spangled Banner*, *Why Men Create*

Newspapers and Magazines *New York Times*, *Hopsters*, *Atlantic*, *Reed Magazine*, *Ramparts*, *National Observer*, *Scholastic Magazine*, *National Geographic*

Censorship has often been a major problem for teachers using minority literature Books as different as Kristin Hunter's *The Soul Brothers* and *Sister Lou*, Robert Lipsyte's *The Contender*, James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, Claude Brown's *Moonchild in the Promised Land*, John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me*, Susan Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Raymond Barrio's *The Plum Plum Pickers*, and Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* have been attacked because they are not "suitable" or "wholesome" or "good" or "healthy" for high school students

The teacher, new or experienced, can safely make some assumptions about censorship Anything is potentially censorable New books ideas films or teaching methods are more likely to be controversial or suspect than something old Censorship is capricious and arbitrary literature of films may come under attack in one school but be freely used in another school nearby Censorship promotes fear, and fear tends to make teachers avoid anything which could be questioned One attack may breed a disease which infects nearby schools and ultimately contaminates a large area A school which has a well-defined policy to handle any attempt at censorship is less likely to be vulnerable than a school which merely hopes that no one will criticize any book used in its English curriculum

To minimize the likelihood of censorship in his classes the teacher should develop on paper a clear statement of his objectives in teaching literature and the means he will employ in meeting them. Such a statement might be valuable for the parent curious about a teacher's aims and materials and it might stave off the potential censor who misunderstands objectives or the teacher's plan. Moreover, a teacher should through his teaching make his students aware of what he's trying to do and how he's going to do it. A teacher also ought to write a rationale for any long work read by an entire class, partly to satisfy the censor that he has carefully thought through the values and problems in the work and partly to reassess the work with a specific class' strengths and limitations in mind.

Although a teacher would do well to listen to a parent who complains about the book his child is reading and help to find a substitute, the teacher who rapidly yields to pressures to get rid of a book used by an entire class will soon find he has made a serious blunder. If parents ask for the removal of one book and that request is granted, no book in the library or the curriculum is safe. Even if the teacher is backed by his administrator, public pressures may establish censorship. In any case, teachers working with their fellow department members should implement a definite written policy to handle the would-be censor. *The Student's Right to Read*, the NCTE pamphlet on censorship, presents practical suggestions and deserves to be in the personal library of every English teacher.

## CONCLUSION

Some futurists contend that the day of the printed word—the newspaper, the magazine, and the book—is on the wane. Perhaps so, although the printed word is likely to remain for some years as a common and frequently used means of communication and enjoyment. At worst, in the next decade or two, the printed word will become a supplement to non-print media; at best, it will complement them.

Perhaps the fear of what is to come causes some English teachers even very good ones to lapse occasionally into a thing aren't they way they used to be syndrome. But anyone who skims through the early issues of the *English Journal* knows full well that not all students of yesteryear were bright or eager readers, enthusiastic about English classes and loving great literature.

Teachers have to accept the students they have in class—the slow, the antagonistic, the reluctant, the apathetic, and the interested—and work from there. English class presents the one time of the school day when students can have the opportunity to read and delight in the ways man conveys excitement, humor, intellect, and greatness through the printed word. The opportunity is just that, a chance for

teachers to convince students that reading is somehow worth all the time and effort it takes

Wallace Stevens once wrote Literature is the better part of life To this it seems inevitably necessary to add provided life is the better part of literature The responsibility of the teacher is to bring life and literature into contact to make clear to students that literature does reflect life and indeed at its best is life That is an awesome responsibility It is also why teaching literature is so exciting

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## TEACHING LANGUAGE\*

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For centuries, the teaching of language has been largely uninspired and uninspiring. English teachers frantically clutched their answer books which dictated "right" and "wrong" while students desperately tried to fill in the blanks or diagram sentences in the prescribed manner. Then the linguists stepped in. They described new ways of looking at language, suggested new methods of viewing its structure and proposed changed attitudes toward dialects and usage. English teachers threw up their hands in shocked dismay. Not knowing where to turn, many English teachers who had rejected traditional approaches but still were uncertain about new ideas simply ignored language study in the English classroom.

Unhappily, many teachers are still puzzled about what grammar to teach, when to teach it and how to arouse enthusiasm for such study. Happily, new areas of language study are beginning to find their way into the high school classroom. Studies involving regional and social dialects, slang, and general semantics are helping students to gain valuable insights into the complexities of language. At the same time, students are discovering that the study of language need not be tedious and irrelevant. Thus, although there still is little consensus among educators about the teaching of language, the prospective English teacher should not feel overwhelmed by the disagreement. Instead, he should keep informed as experts attempt to work out the dilemmas, make his own decisions based on his reading, and continue to explore those areas of language that enthuse and delight his students.

**THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE** Before proceeding with a discussion of the teaching of language, it is first necessary to consider what language is and how it works. Not only do teachers and students

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\*This chapter was prepared by Janet K. Worthington, English Resource Coordinator, Piedmont Schools Project, Greer, South Carolina.

need to understand these basic notions, but also they need to be aware of the implications they may have.

As is any abstract word, "language" is difficult to define precisely. The following analogy helps to move the concept of language from the abstract to the more concrete.

Our English language may be visualized as a ship, sailing, carrying all its speakers along. But they are a restless lot: as the ship sails they stop at various ports, pick up new cargo and new passengers, throw some overboard. They are always fussing with the boat, constantly rebuilding it piecemeal, changing over from oars to sails, then converting to steam; substituting metal for wood here and there, and enlarging it with outriggers or wireless or power steered rudders. Meantime, the striking thing is that, though they never succeed in plugging all the leaks, it stays afloat. In the end it is a fascinating object, some parts of which though very old are still working as they always have; others, though old, changed over for new uses and their former function forgotten. New parts have been patched in more or less effectively down the years, though some appear redundant. From time to time someone who considered himself a naval engineer or architect has tried to bring some artistic order into the whole, but his efforts have had little overall effect because he could never get the ship into drydock. And while he was working away on the poop, others were botching at the scuppers. This strange vessel contains many things, often inconsistent; it has touched at many strange and splendid ports; yet it is still seaworthy, fit for a voyage into space if necessary.<sup>1</sup>

From this analogy, several generalizations can be drawn about the English language. Like a ship, our language is composed of many parts all working together; it is a system made up of many sub-systems. The most basic of these is the sound system made up of phonemes, the smallest units that make a difference in the content of an utterance. A phoneme is easily illustrated by listening to pairs of words such as *pat* and *pet*. We hear sequences of sounds that are the same except for the middle sound: the /æ/ in *pat* and the /e/ in *pet*. Since these two sequences of sounds do constitute different words, we conclude that the /æ/ and /e/ sounds constitute different phonemes.

These phonemes are combined into morphemes which carry meaning. Although morphemes may be single words, a single word may contain several morphemes. The word *workmon's*, for example,

1. Frederic G. Cassidy, "Some Thoughts on Language and Language Processes," in *Language, Linguistics, and School Programs*, Bernard J. Weiss, ed. (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1963), pp. 13-14.

contains three morphemes *work man* and the possessive indicated by *'s*

Morphemes can be combined to form larger units which in turn are arranged into sentences according to the patterns of English syntax. The syntactic system allows us to put together such patterns as *'I like to pat the workman's pet*. Each of these subsystems—the phonological, morphological, and syntactic—is part of the larger language system. It can function only when all subsystems are working together in their particular patterns to form a complex network.

Recognizing the systems at work in our language can help students to understand its structure. By pointing out the positions of words in a sentence and structural signals such as endings, pitch, and stress, the teacher can help students define language units. This view of systems broadens the study of language and presents the teacher with many new ways to approach old problems.

Another generalization which is dramatically illustrated by the ship analogy is the fact that language changes. Some changes may be major, others minor; some may take centuries to complete, others may take place in a short time. The English teacher who is constantly aware of the changing nature of language will realize the importance of keeping up with changes in linguistic knowledge and changes in language itself. He will avoid dogmatic statements about structure and usage and instead will encourage students to seek information for themselves from the latest sources. English teachers who spend precious classroom time drilling in the differences between *who* and *whom*, or *will* and *shall*, have failed to recognize that changes in language usage do occur and that instruction must keep in step with these changes.

No one definition of language is completely satisfactory, but the following one will serve to point up several other important characteristics. Language is a system of patterned vocal behavior by means of which men cooperate in society. The word *vocal* is crucial here; language is a set of sounds, an aural phenomenon. Only speech provides all the essential signals—inflection, stress, pitch—that allow us to study language and characterize it. Writing, on the other hand, is a record of language. In the past, the emphasis on the good quiet classroom has prompted people teaching language to stress skills in written English and to seek goals such as writing a complete sentence or an acceptable essay. A renewed emphasis on oral language in the classroom is needed.

2. Albert H. Marckwardt, *The Structure and Operation of Language in The English Language in the School Program*, Robert F. Hogan, ed. (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1966), p. 31.

Practice and use of oral language can also help students with reading and spelling problems. In his book *The English Language: An Introduction for Teachers*, Fred Brengleman lists five characteristics of the good speller and the good reader. He says he must

- 1 know that spelling is finding a written representation for spoken words . that reading is finding on the page words and grammatical constructions that are already part of his spoken language,
- 2 have a strong awareness of sounds as segments, so that he can for example, recognize words with the same beginning sounds or words that sound alike with different beginning sounds,
- 3 be conscious of sequence—that is, that sounds follow each other in time and that this order corresponds to the left to right order on the printed page,
- 4 be aware of the syllabic structure of words and be able to identify affixes and bases,
- 5 be highly sensitive to the shapes of letters and to the features that distinguish one from another.<sup>3</sup>

These characteristics make very clear the importance of working with oral language if we hope to help children become capable readers and spellers. By emphasizing the sounds of language and by demonstrating to students the regularities in those patterns of sounds teachers can eliminate much of the need for the rote memorization required in the past. If the student does not recognize these patterns and learn how to use them, he is forced to attack each new reading and spelling word as an isolated item to be remembered.

In addition to being patterned vocal behavior, language also is a system of symbols. Word symbols stand for objects, feelings, or ideas in the real world. However, there is no connection between the word and the thing for which it stands. Little children often have trouble grasping this principle. They insist that a chair is called a chair because it looks like a chair. But children are not the only ones who are guilty of such fallacious reasoning. Adults often respond to words like communism, fascist, liberal, or hippie as though the words themselves had magical powers and could injure them.

Although languages are largely arbitrary, they also reflect the environment and culture of the speaker. For example, we tend to regard the division of the color spectrum into the six principal divisions that we call red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet as obvious, necessary, and natural. In Shona however, the spectrum is divided into three divisions: one corresponding roughly to our

3 Fred Brengleman *The English Language: An Introduction for Teachers* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1972), pp. 77–128.

orange red and purple and to blue and blue green and one to green and yellow.

Even within the United States language varies from region to region reflecting the environment and culture of the speaker. A black animal with a white stripe down its back might be called a skunk, a woodchuck, or a polecat. Corn that has not been cut off the ear might be referred to as corn on the cob, sweet corn, green corn, or milking ears. One term is no better than the others; each communicates equally well in its given region. A study of regional and social dialects can do much to make students aware of the varieties of language and the reasons for these varieties. It can help students perceive the richness and complexities of the English language as well as help them develop more positive attitudes toward the individual whose language is different from their own.

From this discussion of the nature of language we can now make five general statements:

1. Language is a system.
2. Language changes.
3. Language is patterned vocal behavior.
4. Language is made up of arbitrary symbols.
5. Language reflects environment and culture.

Each of these statements contains a concept that language teachers should lend students to discover. These discoveries will be valuable in helping students shape workable attitudes toward language.

An exciting way to bring students to an understanding of these concepts is to ask them to create their own language. Working in small groups, students may begin by putting together sounds and ascribing meaning to them. Once they have developed a limited vocabulary, they can attempt to speak and begin to produce a writing system to represent their special language. A general class review of how these languages were created can serve to point up general language concepts. The teacher can direct this review by asking questions such as: How did you begin making up a language? Why did you choose a particular word to stand for a particular object? How did you go about putting words together? What factors influenced your decision to name some objects and ignore others? Will your language be sufficient in twenty years?

Activities that emphasize the never-ending changes in language might include a study of archaic words coupled with a discussion

4. Walter M. MacGinitie, *Language Development*, in *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 687.

of why these words have nearly disappeared from our language. Why, for example, does one rarely hear of a froe, a mattock, or a rice huller today? This study might also include a look at the many new words recently added to our language. *The Bornhardt Dictionary of New English Since 1963* might be used to provide information about such new terms as acidhead, monokini, psych, or slurh.

## THE USES OF LANGUAGE

If an English teacher were to ask his students, "What is language for?" no doubt the general response would be, "to communicate facts and ideas." Communication is, of course, the most obvious use of language and the one that most concerns the English teacher, who daily seeks to improve his students' abilities to read, write, and speak. In addition, language is used in several other ways that students must consider if they are to function in our highly verbal society.

W. Nelson Francis lists five important uses of language. "They are to communicate, to express, to socialize, to control and to think."<sup>5</sup> Young children use language expressively a good deal of the time. They will sit alone and talk for hours with no other apparent purpose than to enjoy the sounds of the words they are putting together. Adults often use language expressively to release tensions caused by anger, frustration, or joy. Such exclamations as "How could I be so dumb!" or "Where did all my money go?" are examples of utterances that the individual might make with no intention of communicating to another, but simply to release his own feelings. English teachers can easily allow their students time to write expressively by setting aside a part of a class period for journal writing. Then, students may record any troublesome problems or feelings with complete assurance that these expressions are private.

Language that involves socializing covers a range from simple perfunctory greetings like, "Hello, how are you?" to the more complex ritualistic language that accompanies formal affairs such as weddings, coronations, inaugurations, or funerals. Again no message is intended, the language is used to keep the wheels of society turning. Students generally are aware of this use of language, but in a number of cases, they may need to discuss and even role play the responses appropriate to a given situation. If students are allowed a chance to practice language in various formal and informal situations, they will be able to develop a repertoire of suitable responses which will help to make them more competent and confident speakers.

<sup>5</sup> W. Nelson Francis, *Language—Its Nature and Use in The English Language in the School Program*, Robert F. Hogan, ed., p. 43.

A fourth use of language to control plays a vital part in the lives of students both inside and outside the classroom. In order to establish a workable learning environment teachers, administrators, and other authority figures sometimes make use of language to control student behavior. Outside of school, advertisers, ministers, politicians, and salesmen attempt to control the actions of individuals by manipulating language. We are constantly being urged to take a break at MacDonalds, test deodorants under our own two arms, or vote down a school referendum. If the student is not aware of how effectively, and subtly he is being manipulated by the language of those around him, he could easily fall into difficulties. Therefore a part of every language arts curriculum should be devoted to a study of general semantics and propaganda techniques.

The last and perhaps most important function of language is to help one think. Franets points to two situations that teachers often encounter which help to illustrate the close relationship between language and thought. One is the experience of having an idea or thought clarified by teaching it to someone else. By verbalizing a concept we somehow make it clearer for ourselves. The other is the case of the student who claims he knew what he wanted to say but couldn't put it into words when actually he really didn't know what he wanted to say.

Let's look in briefly on a classroom scene to see how the various functions of language are at work.

## THE ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE

The acquisition of one's native language is a life-long process. In the early years, it is an informal one involving exposure to several sources of language—family, neighbors, radio, and television—which must be sorted out alone. Once a child arrives at school, his exposure to language is more carefully structured, as teachers seek to introduce reading, writing, and vocabulary skills in a sequential manner.

**THE LANGUAGE OF YOUNG CHILDREN** The learning of a language is one of the most phenomenal accomplishments of the human infant. Despite the fact that language is arbitrary and that it involves a complex group of subsystems, the child, in four or five years, manages to master much of his native tongue.

A good deal of research has been done with young children, and the early stages of language acquisition have been identified. From about the fourth month, an infant attends to language, and by the end of the first year he can follow simple commands and produce a few words on his own. During the early or holophrastic stage of language learning, the child produces one-word utterances which many investigators believe carry the meaning of an entire sentence. For example, if a child says "nana" while pointing eagerly at a bunch of golden fruit, he probably means, "I want a banana."

As the child adds new words to his vocabulary and learns to combine them, his two word utterances seem to be composed of two classes of words: open and pivot. The words in the large open class may be used alone, in combination with other open-class words, or with pivot words. Pivot words are usually used in connection with open-class words. A word like "my" is generally a pivot word, being combined with such open class words as "shoe," "mommy," or "doggie." From these open and pivot classes other grammatical categories develop by subdivision.

The speech of a young child is usually characterized by its telegraphic nature. The child will leave out words, generally unimportant ones, while keeping the retained words in the proper order. By the time he is four or five years old, a child can enter into verbal participation in his culture. He correctly uses much of the morphology of his native tongue and is capable of generating sentences using basic language patterns. By the age of seven or eight he achieves mature articulation of English phonemes. Thus, in the short space of four or five years, a normal child has mastered much of the complex English system.

The development of a study of language acquisition within the language arts curriculum offers useful and exciting opportunities for



students. Students can easily collect data from younger brothers and sisters, from neighbors, or from children for whom they baby sit. They can also use written and taped samples provided by the teacher. Analysis of the data can demonstrate the incredible facility of the human brain to assimilate and produce language. Further, analysis of samples of children's language can be used to illustrate the structure of our language and to provide practice for students in writing complete sentences. This type of study has the advantage of allowing students to move away from the artificial examples of the grammar textbook to work with utterances collected from real life situations. The following example illustrates how this might be done. Suppose that a student brought in the following language samples from a two-year old child: 'I big daddy' and 'Too hot Mama.' The entire class or small groups of students could set to work interpreting these bits of telegraphic speech. Below are only some of the possibilities they might discover.

I am a big daddy  
 I am as big as daddy  
 I want to be as big as daddy  
 I will grow as big as daddy  
 I am too hot. Mama  
 Are you too hot, Mama?  
 The stove is too hot. Mama  
 This food is too hot to eat. Mama

The students then can analyze their possibilities, noting the sentence patterns and parts added by their interpretations. Finally the student who brought in the language sample could specify the context of each utterance, thereby enabling the class or group to decide which of their interpretations was most suitable.

In addition, students might work with the sentences of older children, noting irregularities in syntax and morphology. Using an inductive method, the teacher could help students discover for themselves the rules that govern the production of English sentences. Students given a question such as 'Mommy, why is anybody not talking?' will immediately recognize it as an immature form of

'Mommy, why isn't anybody talking?' By comparing the differences in these two questions and other similar examples, students could be led to formulate a generalization about the position of a negative word in a question.

Not only is the study of child language a novel way to approach language structure, it is also a useful study in its own right. Understanding how language is acquired can help students understand what language is, how we use it, and why proficiency in using it is important.

A short course or unit in language acquisition could easily become a part of the high school curriculum and would provide excellent opportunities for high school students to examine language scientifically. Such study could also be individualized with each student pursuing in depth the aspect of child language he found most interesting.

**THE LANGUAGE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN** Much research has been done on the language of school children including extensive studies of the vocabulary and syntax of children in various grades. As a child grows and his contacts with the outside world increase his language changes. His peers begin to play a very important role in determining the characteristics of his speech. Also because of his increasing language experience his awareness of variations in style increases. He notes that different kinds of language are used in different situations and he begins to move toward using the prestige standard dialect when the occasion calls for it.

Gradually too his sentence patterns become more varied and more complex. In order to measure precisely this complexity or syntactic maturity researchers have utilized a number of general indices of language maturity. For some time mean sentence length was used. However in 1965 Dr. Kellogg Hunt developed a more promising index called the minimal terminable unit or T-unit which consists of one main clause with all subordinate clauses attached to it.<sup>6</sup> Hunt found mean T-unit length to be a superior index of maturity particularly for written compositions since immature young children often produce very long sentences by connecting a number of short sentences with *and* or *but*.

The following examples given by Hunt illustrate more vividly the differences in writing that occur when short sentences are reduced to clauses, phrases or single words and embedded within a main clause.

The sailor finally came on deck. He was tall. He was rather ugly.  
 He had a limp. He had offered them a prize.  
 The sailor finally came on deck. He was tall and rather ugly and had a limp. He had offered them a prize.  
 The tall, rather ugly sailor with a limp, who had offered them a prize, finally came on deck.

Clearly high school English teachers would prefer the writing of a student who was capable of producing the last sentence containing

<sup>6</sup> Kellogg W. Hunt, *Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1965), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 144-45.

eighteen words per T-unit to that of one who could only produce the choppy prose of the first example with its mean T-unit length of 5.4 words

In order for children to write more mature prose containing longer T-units, they must be able to perform sentence transformations requiring reducing embedding, and manipulating elements within the sentence. How can we help students to develop this skill? What methods can be used successfully to increase syntactic maturity?

Several studies have been conducted testing various approaches. D. R. Bateman and F. J. Zidonis taught transformational grammar to a group of ninth and tenth graders and concluded that these students ended up writing more syntactically complex sentences than students who had not had such instruction.<sup>8</sup> John Mellon taught transformational grammar to seventh-grade students, which they then used in working through a series of sentence combining activities. Mellon too, concluded that students who had studied this approach to grammar and had worked through the sentence combining exercises wrote more mature prose.<sup>9</sup>

A more recent study offers English teachers yet another method for increasing their students' ability to transform sentences. Using seventh grade students, Frank O'Hare taught sentence combining exercises based on Mellon's design but he eliminated all formal grammar study. Here are several examples of the types of exercises his students did. (In these examples, 'A' form is the sentence-combining problem confronting the student, 'B' form is an acceptable student answer.)

- A SOMETHING should tell you SOMETHING  
John has not called in five days (THE FACT THAT)  
You are not going steady anymore (THAT)
- B The fact that John has not called in five days should tell you that you are not going steady anymore.<sup>10</sup>
- A SOMETHING is not easy  
Mrs. Adams condoned SOMETHING (IT-FOR-TO)  
Her son was sent to Vietnam (S + ING)

8 D. R. Bateman and F. J. Zidonis. *The Effect of a Study of Transformational Grammar on the Writing of Ninth and Tenth Graders*. NCTE Research Report no. 6 (Urbana Ill. NCTE 1966)

9 John C. Mellon. *Transformational Sentence Combining: A Method for Enhancing the Development of Syntactic Fluency in English Composition*. NCTE Research Report no. 10 (Urbana Ill. NCTE 1969)

10 Frank O'Hare. *Sentence Combining: Improving Student Writing without Formal Grammar Instruction*. NCTE Research Report no. 15 (Urbana Ill. NCTE, 1973) p. 44

- B: It is not easy for Mrs. Adams to condone her son's being sent to Vietnam.<sup>11</sup>
- A: Some teachers often hesitate to give students answers to those questions.  
 The teachers are rather timid.  
 The answers are frank.  
 The answers are personal.  
 The questions are basic.  
 The questions disturb us all as we try to understand our lives.  
 (WHICH/THAT)
- B: Some rather timid teachers often hesitate to give students frank, personal answers to those basic questions that disturb us all as we try to understand our lives.<sup>12</sup>

O'Hare's method produced outstanding results. The students who had the sentence-combining practice made great gains by all measures of syntactic maturity. Also, their compositions were judged to be of a better overall quality than those of students who did not have the practice.

An important aspect of O'Hare's method is the necessary classroom atmosphere and the student-teacher relationship it allows. Rather than creating the traditional negative feeling so often accompanying grammar and usage drills, teachers establish an open, positive atmosphere. Instead of placing the teacher in the role of dictator of correctness, the students themselves take over the job, and majority vote decides whether or not a student has produced a "good English sentence." Oral recitation plays a large part in the lessons, so students have frequent chance to formulate their own sentences and hear them repeated by their classmates.

The advantages of O'Hare's method are many. First of all, his entire procedure is based on the students' previously acquired ability to use language. As native speakers of English, students recognize a grammatical English sentence whenever they read or hear one. Indeed, the linguist Noam Chomsky has suggested that our powers to perceive grammatical structures are innate, and that these abilities allow a child to learn how to recognize and produce grammatical sentences, despite the hodgepodge of fragmentary language that surrounds him daily.

Further, O'Hare's method removes from the teacher his traditional role of arbiter of correctness and suitability and places these decisions in the hands of the students. By this means the power of English teachers who for many years have been prone to demand

11. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

that students meet standards set down by textbooks with no regard for language as it is being used is usurped

Finally O Hare's research clearly demonstrates that syntactic maturity can be increased without the use of formal grammatical instruction. This is not to say that grammar should not be taught only that such instruction is probably not the most economical and successful way of helping students to write more complex English sentences

## THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE

**WHAT THE TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW** Although educators and linguists continue to argue long and loud about what grammar students need to know there appears to be a fairly happy consensus on what the English teacher needs to know about the structure of language. No one demands that a teacher become a linguist or a language theorist a feat that would be impossible anyway considering the numerous other areas in which he must have some background. What leaders in the field do recommend is that the prospective English teacher be well enough informed in the area of language that he can evaluate texts and answer the typical questions which his students might raise. Recommendations for an adequate program of study include some work with phonology morphology syntax and lexicon as well as a familiarity with the purposes principles and procedure of the various approaches to English grammar. John Sinclair sums it all up in this way. All we must prescribe for the English teacher as regards teaching linguistics is enough knowledge to evaluate the changing scene to experiment with new approaches and to calculate the effect of the advances on his teaching as a whole. No less is expected of a teacher in any subject.<sup>13</sup>

**WHY TEACH GRAMMAR** Ever since the study of English grammar was first introduced in this country pupils have struggled to make sense of it. Lindley Murray who is often called the father of English grammar was reportedly once chided by a friend who said to him. Of all the contrivances invented for puzzling the brains of the young your grammar is the worst. In 1835 when Enoch Pond adapted Murray's Grammar he said of his system that he is trying to make agreeable a subject naturally dry and tedious in the

13 John M Sinclair *Linguistics and the Teaching of English in Language and Language Learning* Albert H Marckwardt ed (Urbana Ill NCTE 1966) p 33

14 Clifton Johnson *Old Time Schools and School Books* (New York Dover 1963) p 365

same ways that the skillful apothecary gilds his pill and colors the otherwise nauseous draught."<sup>15</sup> For over a hundred years, students have continued to moan over the seemingly endless series of drills and parsing exercises that constitute much of grammar study. Granted, some students who were skillful at these activities found grammar to their liking but these students were definitely in the minority.

The arguments about the usefulness of this much-hated grammar study have been going on for generations and continue today. Scholars have not as yet agreed on an answer to the question of why grammar is a necessary study for students, be they in elementary, middle or high school. Issues have been raised, research conducted, points refuted, restated, and reconsidered, and still no definite statements can be made about why grammar is important.

**Improving writing** Many educators have claimed that a study of grammar is helpful in teaching students how to write more effectively. In 1963, Richard Braddock and others conducted a review of research on written composition and concluded that "the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible, or because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing."<sup>16</sup> Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner reiterate Braddock's conclusion, saying, "In general the experimental evidence revealed a discouraging lack of relationship between grammatical knowledge and the better utilization of expressive skills."<sup>17</sup>

However, since the publication of these statements, linguists have developed new approaches to the study of the structure of language. Therefore, it is now necessary to wait for more complete empirical evidence assessing the application of these new findings before making any definitive statements about grammar as an aid to writing.

**Interpreting literature** The claim has also been made that a study of grammar will help students to interpret literature. Although there is little empirical evidence to support this claim, it would seem possible that a high school English teacher could help his students to understand the meaning of literature particularly poetry by exploring the syntax of the work. Many pupils find poetry difficult because of its convoluted sentences and elliptical expressions.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 367

<sup>16</sup> Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd Jones and Lowell Schoer, *Research in Written Composition* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1963) pp. 37-38.

<sup>17</sup> Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching* (New York: Dell, 1966) p. 65.

Rearranging the words in a poem into more conventional patterns could easily be one of the first steps in demonstrating for students that poetry is not as esoteric as they might think.<sup>18</sup>

Understanding human behavior One of the most common reasons given for teaching grammar is that a study of language structure is important because language is a form of human behavior and such a study throws some light on the nature of man. Although students have used their language system for many years they are often unaware of what that system is. Discovering the order that is present in language can be reassuring to students and they may be delightfully surprised to find that they can already handle such complexity. Thus they may become more confident speakers and writers.

The question 'Why teach grammar?' is still a most perplexing and involved one. Those who argue in favor of grammar in the classroom generally advocate a particular kind of grammar and a particular approach to teaching it. Today it is almost impossible to find an English educator who favors the traditional method of memorizing rules and parsing sentences. It is equally difficult to find any sort of consensus on the very best type of grammar to teach and the very best way to teach it. The English teacher is therefore faced with the responsibility of reading widely, evaluating the needs of his class and coming to his own conclusions about the wisest course to follow.

**THREE VIEWS OF STRUCTURE** No attempt will be made here to describe in detail the various grammatical theories since this is a subject so broad that several volumes would be necessary to do justice to each one. Instead our concern will center around the strengths and weaknesses of each type of grammar when applied in classroom teaching.

Misconceptions about grammar are many. Some people believe that its rules are fixed and sacred. For them mastery of these rules is the key to writing and speaking correct English. However, before the seventeenth century practically no grammatical descriptions of English existed.<sup>19</sup> Despite this lack English had been spoken and written for centuries. Even today a young child learns to use his language years before he has any formal instruction in its grammar. Clearly then grammar is not a prerequisite to writing and speaking. Neither is grammar static or complete. In fact there are many

18 See Sallie Isaac's article 'From Language to Linguistic Criticism' *English Journal* 57 (Jan 1968) 47 for further suggestions for incorporating a study of syntactic patterns into the literature curriculum.

19 See John Algeo's article 'Linguistics: Where do We Go from Here?' *English Journal* 58 (Jan 1969) 102-12 for a brief readable history of the teaching of English grammar.

grammars which describe language from different points of view. Much of this variation stems from a failure to recognize that grammar is a description of a language, a set of rules that is used by speakers of the language to make up sentences.

**Traditional grammar** Traditional school grammar has fallen in stature very rapidly in the past twenty years, although textbooks based on it are still in use in many parts of the country. The inconsistencies and inadequacies of this type of grammar are many. First of all, traditional English grammar is based on Latin grammar, yet the two languages have very little in common. Latin is a highly inflected language, depending primarily on case endings to convey the meaning of the sentence. English, on the other hand, relies primarily on word order. If, for example, someone said, "Him hit she," most English-speaking people would interpret the statement to mean that "he" did the hitting and "she" was the poor soul who took the beating, despite the fact that the forms of the pronouns indicate just the opposite.

A good deal of time is spent by traditional grammarians in classifying words as parts of speech. Eight such classes are commonly taught: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections. However, the definitions governing these classifications have different bases, some are based on meaning and some on function. For example, a noun is defined as "the name of a person, place, or thing" whereas a preposition is defined as "a word that connects nouns to verbs, adjectives, and adverbs." Not only do these traditional definitions have different bases, they are also, in many cases, difficult to apply to sentences. In the sentence "He came to a sudden stop," is "stop" a noun or a verb? Does it name a person, place, or thing or does it express action? Probably the most puzzling of all the definitions in traditional grammar is that of a sentence as "a group of words expressing a complete thought." Generations of students have pondered over fragments like, "Because I couldn't understand it," wondering why this thought was not complete.

Traditional grammar involves many rules that are prescriptive rather than descriptive. Prescriptions such as "After verbs like *be*, *come*, *seem*, or *appear*, be careful to use an adjective subjective complement rather than an adverb" or "Make the verb agree in number and person with its subject," dictate to the student which constructions are right and which are wrong. Although prescriptive grammars may be necessary for persons learning English as a second language, their usefulness to the native is questionable. A much more workable approach to the question of "correct" or "incorrect" forms involves examining the situation and weighing the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the form to it.

Despite the many weaknesses of traditional grammar, it has served schools for many centuries and is the grammar that is most well



known. Therefore if a teacher decides to introduce one of the new grammars to his students he should first determine their previous exposure to traditional grammar and plan his instruction accordingly keeping in mind the confusion of terms that might result.

**Structural grammar** Structural grammar which gained popularity in the English classroom in the fifties and sixties offers teachers and students some new ways to approach old problems. Instead of classifying words according to meaning the structuralist advocates basing grammar on form. To him a word can be classified in three ways: by its various forms, by the words it functions with, and by the syntactic patterns in which it usually appears. A noun then is a word that can have plural and possessive forms that can function with determiners like *the* or *on* and that can fill slots in test frames such as *The \_\_\_\_\_ runs fast* or *He threw the \_\_\_\_\_*. Using this system it is even possible to classify nonsense words such as those found in Lewis Carroll's poem *Jabberwocky*. But even though the structural grammarians were more methodical and objective in setting up their classifications, their system still has limitations and has met with only moderate success in the schools.

Other important aspects of structural grammar include identifying basic sentence patterns and illustrating the relationships of the various parts of a sentence by a procedure known as immediate constituent analysis. Work with sentence patterns offers some limited help to the teacher and his students. When making recommendations on composition teachers can suggest new patterns or alterations in present patterns in order to show students how they might clarify their writing.

Structural grammar moves away from the prescriptive approach common in traditional grammar and provides a purely descriptive approach to the structure of language. Despite its improvements over traditional grammar, structural grammar has left many questions about the structure of language unanswered.

**Transformational generative grammar** Whereas traditional and structural grammarians attempt to provide rules for setting up classes of words, generative grammarians are solely concerned with rules for generating sentences. Generative grammar sets out to state the rules that will generate all and only the grammatical sentences of English.

It attempts to provide rules that account for not only existing sentences but also all the other sentences that could be produced in a given language at a given time.<sup>20</sup>

Transformational grammar makes explicit many structural relationships that native speakers have intuitively recognized but have never been able to explain. Although we recognize that there is some

connection between the two sentences "Sam made a great catch" and "A great catch was made by Sam". Transformationalists are able to demonstrate for us exactly what their relationship is. These grammarians specify that each sentence has both a deep structure—the meaning of the sentence—and a surface structure—the form the utterance actually takes in communication. The sentence "A great catch was made by Sam" is the result of a passive transformation applied to the deep structure "Sam + make + past + a + great + catch". By approaching structure in this way, it is possible to explain many of the ambiguities of the English language and to clarify the hierarchical nature of sentence structure.

But transformational generative grammar has, alas, not as yet provided the total answer to the classroom teacher's dilemma. Although today it appears to be the most satisfactory way of explaining the structure of the English language, its system is still new and changing rapidly. Various linguists are working in various ways on various areas using different terminology. The results often appear chaotic and confusing to the English teacher struggling to keep pace with new developments. In addition, the abbreviations and symbols used by transformational grammarians often perplex and vex English teachers. Consider, for example, the following transformation rule:  $D - Ns + Nu = D + Nu - Ns + Nu$ . It is no wonder that rules such as this resembling as they do a chemistry formula, have caused English teachers to be uncertain about their abilities to understand and teach this type of grammar.

The future is very uncertain. Transformational generative grammar offers many new insights and promises many more to come. Other new grammars are also beginning to be developed, notably stratificational grammar, which is still in its infancy. To the English teacher John Algeo offers this sound advice:

It seems to me that we who teach English on whatever level are faced with a dual responsibility. On the one hand, we must make use of as much of the new grammars as we can. We can't sit back and pretend the whole thing never happened or hope that the new grammars will quietly go away. We must respond to them. On the other hand, it is decidedly premature to start hailing Messiahs and writing Creeds. A healthy skepticism about those in sheep's clothing who can't say *haa* properly is in order. Particularly if anyone says, "Here is a simple, easily useable grammar that will solve all your problems," I refuse to believe him. He is either a rascal or a madman.<sup>21</sup>

**METHODS AND APPROACHES** Despite the diversity of opinion surrounding the question of the best kind of grammar to teach, several

21 Algeo, *Linguistics*, *English Journal* 58 (Jan 1969) 112.

approaches and methods are widely recommended. The descriptive approach to structure is unanimously favored over the prescriptive. Many times however English teachers who are accustomed to the role of guardian and preserver of good English find it difficult to stick to a descriptive grammar. However if the teacher is to successfully use a descriptive approach he must guard against such tendencies by constantly and carefully scrutinizing his methods materials and attitudes.

Grammar can be taught inductively or deductively but the most suitable approach is the inductive one not only because of the nature of the subject but also because of the nature of the learning process. Since students already use the grammar of their native language English grammar is not a subject that needs to be taught as totally new information in the ways that algebra and chemistry are. Instead the purpose of grammar study is to make the student aware of the structures he has used unconsciously for years. To do this most effectively the teacher can draw on the student's intuitive knowledge to help him form generalizations about grammar. Frank J. Zidonis presents some of the advantages of this approach.

The act of discovery, the sense of adventure, the satisfaction of original observation—all these are too often elements missing in our classrooms. We need to become involved with our students in making serious inquiry into the facts of the language we use and into attempts to explain those facts.<sup>2</sup>

Although an inductive approach may require careful preparation and extra planning, the rewards to both teacher and student will certainly be worth the added effort. Actually preparing lessons using an inductive approach is not as difficult as it might seem. Consider for example a lesson exploring the determiner system in English. The data for such a lesson could easily be collected from students' recorded speech or written compositions. The teacher might then ask students to look at these language samples and answer the following questions: When is *a* used? When is *the* used? How does meaning change when one is substituted for the other? What words cannot be preceded by determiners like *a* or *the*? Further questioning along this line could be used to lead students to generalize about how the words are used.

In the past the emphasis in grammar classes was often on parsing, diagramming, and completing sentences or on correcting errors. This analysis of prepared materials did not prove especially helpful to most students when it came time for them to write their own sentences.

22. Frank J. Zidonis "Incorporating Transformational Grammar into the Curriculum," *English Journal* 56 (Dec. 1967): 1315.

paragraphs or themes. Any study of grammar, then, should involve as much student language production as possible. This can easily be done by having students provide language samples for analysis by having them rewrite or rearrange elements within the samples collected, or by allowing them to report orally or in written form on their own language studies.

An inquiry into the structure of language should also include a discussion of questions of a general nature relating to grammar. Students need to understand what grammar is, what methods are used to develop grammars, and how complete and accurate existing grammars are. In short, they need to learn the processes, not memorize a product. An inquiry into process will help students realize that grammar is not a static arbitrary system, but an open, changing one. These objectives might be reached by several different approaches including having students write their own grammar or asking them to compare existing grammatical descriptions.

By arousing student curiosity and then allowing them to make discoveries about the structure of their language, teachers can make grammar study an exciting stimulating pursuit. However, teachers also need to keep in mind that an in-depth, technical study of the intricacies of English structure needs to be reserved for students with special aptitudes for and interest in language. In schools with an elective system, this can easily be done by offering a quarter or semester course for those who wish to pursue such a study.

### SEMANTICS

One problem that recurs more and more frequently these days in books and plays and movies is the inability of people to communicate with the people they love: husbands and wives who can't communicate, children who can't communicate with their parents and so on. And these characters in books and plays and in real life I might add spend hours bemoaning the fact that they can't communicate. I feel that if a person can't communicate the very least he can do is to shut up.<sup>23</sup>

No doubt most high school students have experienced the dilemma that Tom Lehrer describes above. However most of them find shutting up a difficult solution to the problem. They want to be heard and they want to be understood. What they need is help in communicating some assistance in finding ways to make their ideas and feelings clear to those around them. A study of human interaction through communication or general semantics can help them to do just that.

<sup>23</sup> Tom Lehrer *That Was the Year That Was* Recorded July 1965 at the Hungry 1 San Francisco California

Such a study might include work in the following areas: words as symbols, the meaning of words including their connotative and denotative meanings, words in and out of context, reports, inferences and judgments, the abstraction process, classification and metaphors and figurative language. Most of these concepts are not difficult for students to grasp. After all, they have been using language to communicate for twelve years or more. What students need most is to develop a critical attitude toward language, to recognize how words are working on them and how they can work for them. All this is not accomplished merely by having students read about semantics, but rather by allowing them to try out each new idea and test it against their observations and experiences. A variety of methods including reading, writing, discussing, role playing and collecting examples from the mass media could become successful ways to approach a study of human communication.

**WORDS AS SYMBOLS** To illustrate for students that words are merely symbols that have no connection with the objects that they name, the teacher might ask students to switch the names of several common objects in the room. The chalk could become the eraser, the eraser the chalk. Then several students could be asked to follow simple instructions using these objects. When the students have trouble, the teacher might pose questions such as the following to help explain the problem: Are we so accustomed to certain labels that they have become part of the object? Who decided on the names for these objects? Why have these names remained the same for generations? Thus the teacher can help students to realize what words are. To demonstrate the fuzzy thinking that can arise when people forget that a word is only a symbol, several examples such as the following could be read to the class:

The City Council of Cambridge, Massachusetts, unanimously passed a resolution (December 1939) making it illegal to possess harbor-sequester, introduce or transport within the city limits any book, map, magazine, newspaper, pamphlet, handbill or circular containing the words Lenin or Leningrad.

A picture in the magazine *Life* shows the backs of a sailor's hands with the letters **HOLDFAST** tattooed on the fingers. The captain explains: This tattoo was supposed to keep sailors from falling off the yardarm.

Students could then collect and analyze examples from their own lives.

In order to help students better understand the nature of a word symbol, it may be necessary for them to consider the nature of the symbol alone. A symbol may stand for many things. The symbol "X" has a different meaning in each of the following examples

- 1  $x + 3 = 5$
- 2 Xmas
- 3 X on a treasure map
- 4 X in the lower right hand corner of a cheek
- 5 X at the end of a friendly letter

Just as X can represent many different objects or concepts, so can many words particularly abstract terms such as love, freedom equality, or security, have many meanings

In order to be effective communicators, students must be aware that

[meanings are in persons' minds, not in words, and when we say that a word has or possesses such and such a meaning we are really saying that it has evoked, or caused, those meanings. Until it gets into a mind, a word is only puffs of air or streaks of ink. What a word, sentence or other expressions means to hearers are mainly what they make him think or feel or do as a fairly direct consequence of hearing or seeing them and more narrowly what they make him think of as the direct and almost immediate consequence of hearing or seeing them.<sup>25</sup>

Often, students fail to recognize the individuality of meanings and that the meanings that words have for them may not be the same as the meanings they have for others. For example, if you greet your best friend with "Boy, I sure like that dress you're wearing!" both you and she have a clear referent for the garment in question. However if you instead proclaim, "I can't stand the new fall fashions" your meaning may get lost. The following activity is designed to help students discover the different pictures that a group of words may bring to mind. It will also demonstrate for students the importance of choosing precise terms in order to insure that the image in the mind of the reader is similar to the image in the mind of the writer.

Ask each student to write a two- or three sentence description of each of the following

- 1 a simple problem
- 2 a tall man

<sup>25</sup> Edward L. Thorndike *The Psychology of Semantics* *The American Journal of Psychology* (Oct 1946) 613

- 3 a good book
- 4 a dream vacation

Now ask each student to read his description to a classmate and compare it to his or hers. What differences are there? Can each of the descriptions be revised so that the images appear the same to both students?

**THE MEANINGS OF WORDS—CONNOTATION AND DENOTATION** Most words have two types of meaning: connotative and denotative. The denotative meaning of a word is the thing being discussed; it represents something that can be pointed out, something that really exists. If someone says, "I have a pencil" and holds up an object, there is no question of what the word pencil refers to. The connotative meaning, on the other hand, is the image inside the listener's head. All words have connotations, but terms such as mermaid or unicorn have no denotation since there is no such object in the real world.

S. I. Hayakawa discusses two types of connotation: informative and affective. Informative connotations are the agreed-upon meanings of a word. For example, people agree that the sound/symbol guitar will denote guitar, guitar, and guitar. Thus, the word guitar is now used to connote a certain class of objects that have a particular shape and produce music. Affective connotation refers to the feelings that are associated with particular words. These feelings may be either positive or negative. Difficulties in communication arise when words are chosen for their affective connotation alone, with no regard for denotation or informative connotation. For example, a reader sees an ad for a cigarette that provides a milder taste because the tobacco has been softened. The ad writer, no doubt, had no wish for his reader to ponder the denotative or informative meaning of soften, or how in the world one softens tobacco. Rather, he hoped they would merely react favorably to the pleasant associations the term carries with it.

Students often do not realize how they are being used by words with very strong positive or negative affective connotations. A variety of activities may be used to make clear to them the different types of meaning and how they are used.

Students might be given a list of terms and asked to rank them according to their affective connotations. One such list might include common names for members of the local law enforcement staff: police, cop, law officer, pig, and so on. Still another method of discovering the affective connotations of words would be to have students analyze a list of words, noting their own strong positive or negative feelings toward each word. Such words as mother, home, communist, courage, poverty, death, and money should provide a basis for interesting dis-

cussions Also students studying connotative meaning might bring in advertisements from magazines or newspapers and analyze the way in which the words might have been selected It is interesting to note the alternatives that are available to slogan writers and to try to determine why one was chosen over another Why, for example, is Delta an airline run by professionals, rather than by skilled technicians or dedicated workers?

**WORDS IN AND OUT OF CONTEXT** Students also need to be aware that words change meanings in context, that context can provide a useful tool in determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word and that taken out of context, phrases may mean something very different from what they were intended to mean

The following examples provide a vivid illustration of distortions possible when phrases are removed from their setting The phrases listed below are fictional ones which a publisher used to advertise a new novel

Excellently written'

'A beautiful story

Well developed characters

The author has a marvelous way with words

The above phrases in context

- 1 The novel is excellently written if we consider correct grammar as the only goal of good writing
- 2 This could have been a beautiful story—but it isn't
- 3 Well developed characters do not exist in this novel
- 4 The author has a marvelous way with words He makes them completely incomprehensible and his prose is dead<sup>26</sup>

**REPORTS, INFERENCES AND JUDGMENTS** Although the differences between reports inferences and judgments are easy to identify in the abstract many individuals are guilty of confusing the three and responding to one as though it were another A report is a verifiable statement an inference is a statement made about something unknown based on something known a judgment is an expression of approval or disapproval

An effective way to demonstrate these types of statements and the limitations of each to students is to set up a series of role playing activities in which students may respond to everyday situations and

<sup>26</sup> Ninth Grade Curriculum I Tri Component The Calculus of English (Semantics) Curriculum Study in English part of The Development and Testing of Approaches to the Teaching of English in the Junior High School unpublished report (Tallahassee Florida State University 1968)



then discuss their responses in terms of the inferences or judgments that were made. In addition, students might bring in news stories and examine them to determine the degree of objectivity the reporter was able to maintain. Small town newspapers, in particular, often allow themselves the liberty of including inferences and judgments in their news reporting as the following excerpt from the *Lamar Democrat*, Lamar, Missouri, clearly shows.

George came in from Verdella Tuesday evening. He was drunk as a lord and weaving about the east part of town in his truck. On his arrival [at the jail] he greeted Sheriff Bassett with the remark "I'm one drunk." And there wasn't any doubt about the veracity of the first three words of this statement.

**ABSTRACTION AND CLASSIFICATION** Abstracting involves looking at two or more objects or ideas, finding out how they are alike, classifying them according to these similarities, and ignoring their differences. The process of abstracting is often illustrated by an abstraction ladder on which one can move upward from the specific to the general. The higher up the ladder one proceeds, the more differences one must ignore. A typical ladder for human being would look something like this:

Organism

Animal

Biped

Mammal

Human

Mala

Richard M. Nixon

The process of abstracting is an important part of learning because through it students can group ideas and objects and draw generalizations. However, care in using this process is also important. It is very easy to move from a single fact—Mrs. Sudduth, a black woman, is lazy—to all black people are lazy. Unwarranted jumps up the abstraction ladder can lead to unwarranted clichés such as all women are bad drivers. Students are daily exposed to such statements and they need to be conscious of the semantic implications of such pronouncements.

**METAPHORS AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** Although students are frequently exposed to metaphorical language when studying poetry, they are often unaware that it also plays an important part in their everyday lives. A good way to point out this fact to students is

to have them bring in newspapers and magazines and use the advertisements in them to stimulate a discussion of the language of advertising. Perhaps once a student realizes that the jingles and slogans that are so familiar are actually written in metaphorical language, he will be less reluctant to try his own hand at writing figures of speech. Perhaps he might wish to role-play the part of an ad writer for a large company.

Students can be given additional opportunities to write their own metaphorical language. This can be done by giving them factual sentences that they could expand or by having them rewrite clichés such as quiet as a mouse, hard as a rock, or light as a feather.

**OTHER POSSIBILITIES** The areas of study and the activities suggested here represent only a beginning. The study of human communication is a subject that could be explored in many ways, from many angles. Nonverbal communication, including a look at gestures and body language, might be a part of such a study. Pantomime, charades, and improvisations provide excellent means of exploring the paralinguistic aspects of language. Point of view, tone, and audience are other important considerations in discussing human communication. Literature study and creative writing assignments, as well as activities involving speech and drama, would help students grasp these concepts. The list could go on and on. The materials to be studied are limitless; we are daily surrounded by human communication. Hopefully such studies will result in students' increased awareness of language and ability to use and understand it. Students may come to find that effective communication is possible; it is not necessary to shut up.

## LANGUAGE VARIATION

In the past, English teachers recognized only one dialect, usually specified by the nebulous term, Standard English. This was the language of the classroom; all other varieties were considered improper. The work of linguists, however, brought about new understanding of language variation. When linguists set out to describe language specifically and objectively, they came up with some astonishing conclusions. They stated that no dialect is linguistically superior to another. They noted that some dialects, such as the one commonly associated with black Americans, are not the result of careless deviations from accepted standard speech. Instead, they have a complete, systematic grammatical structure of their own. While such findings had far-reaching implications for the teacher of English and might have influenced classroom practices considerably, such has not generally been the case. English teachers were reluctant to

give up the idea of correct usage and a standard dialect. They continued to hold fast to the ideal of Standard English and to demand that students strive to use this correct form in the classroom at all times. These notions are now gradually breaking down and teachers are becoming more tolerant of dialect variations.

**DIALECTS** A beginning study of dialects might involve a discussion of what dialects are, how they differ, what types exist, and how they came into being. Roger Shuy, in his booklet *Discovering American Dialects*, tells us that

A dialect is a variety of a language. It differs from other varieties in certain features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (grammar means both word construction and syntax). It may reveal something about the social or regional background of its speakers, and it will generally be understood by speakers of other dialects of the same language.<sup>2</sup>

Dialects are generally broken down into two types: regional and social. Although it is obvious that the two overlap, both the geographic area in which a person lives and his social position work together to determine the variety of language he will use. Some people have the notion that a dialect is a manner of speaking only; others possess. Actually, each of us speaks a dialect which has been influenced by many factors: age, occupation, travel, education, and even sex.

The reasons for variations in regional dialect can often be traced to the patterns of settlement and the shifts in population that have occurred in the area. Immigrants from various countries settled in particular regions, and their speech had a definite effect on the language of that region. Also, as the West opened up, settlers moved out from the East. Dialect boundaries tend to follow these patterns of settlement and run horizontally rather than vertically. In addition, the geography of a region had an effect on the variety of language that developed. Mountains, rivers, and deserts tended to isolate groups of people so that unique usage patterns persisted in areas that were cut off from others.

Typically, the United States has been divided by linguists into three regions: the northern, the southern, and the midland. However, now that mass communication has become so prevalent and travel so inexpensive and accessible, these lines are blurring more and more.

**GOALS OF DIALECT STUDY** Dialect study in the high school offers students the opportunity to explore the rich resources of the

27 Roger W. Shuy, *Discovering American Dialects* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1971), p. 4.

English language. It can help them to realize that there are many possible ways of expressing an idea or a feeling. It also can be used to increase students' understanding and tolerance of others. Often a particular dialect will immediately bring to mind a stereotyped image of the speaker—the sweet but dumb southern belle, the sophisticated, intelligent Bostonian, or the feuding, drinking hillbilly. By studying dialects, students can see that language is not indicative of personality, but rather is a result of patterned behavior learned in a particular environment.

**METHODS** The wide variety of approaches to studying dialects help to make it a particularly interesting topic for the high school student. If the teacher wishes to engage students in a study of regional dialects, he may ask them to attempt some simplified field work such as dialectologists perform. Students may collect data from classmates, friends, neighbors, or relatives. To expand such a study, they might even correspond with students in other regions of the country. Tape recordings of various regional dialects can be prepared by teachers or students. In discovering the differences in phonology, vocabulary, and grammar that exist in regional dialects, students may use check lists, such as those provided in Shuy's booklet, or they may collect samples of various ways of speaking and analyze them.

If the teacher decides to ask students to engage in an in-depth study of pronunciation differences, he must be prepared to commit an adequate amount of time to helping students develop an ear that will hear them. This cannot be accomplished in a day or two; students must become familiar with a phonetic alphabet and learn to hear some of the slight differences in sound that its symbols represent. An exploration of the sounds of English and how they are produced can be interesting and useful to students, but it will require a good deal of classroom time. It is then up to the teacher to decide for himself if tackling this aspect of dialect is worth the required time and energy.

Another interesting approach to regional dialects involves a study of school language. In his article "The Analysis of Student Talk: Classroom Possibilities for Dialect Study," Hugh Agee provides a check list of words which includes many terms that students use every day to describe their school environment. Agee suggests the following values in such a study:

In any case the results of a student talk survey, regardless of the techniques employed, should promote an increased understanding of language variation. In short, students will not only learn more about others but also will likely learn more about themselves. Certainly not to be overlooked is the promise school language study

holds for promoting more meaningful dialog between students and teachers at a time when understanding of issues and concerns has become so important<sup>28</sup>

In addition literature provides a rich source of material for dialect study. Novels, short stories, and poems might be included; works by authors such as Stephen Vincent Benet, Paul Dunbar, Robert Frost, Sidney Lanier, Jesse Stuart, Willa Cather, Jessaym West, and Marjorie Rawlings offer many possibilities.

By examining a piece of literature written in dialect, students may be led to discover generalizations about the techniques of dialect writing as well as indications of particular characters by answering carefully constructed questions. A selection such as the following one from *Cool World* could provide the basis for discussion.

They call him Priest because he always wear black. Black suits with thin tight pants. One day some body see him an they say: Man, you always in black. Like a priest. You the hep priest, Man. So that how come he is call priest.

Priest say to me: Man, I tellin you. You aint gonna find anything good as this for the kind of bread I askin for. You can go up and down this street a thousan times an you aint gonna find it.

I say to Priest: Man, I dont have time to go up and down this street a thousan times. I in a big hurry. But shutman that aint worth no 15 dollas.

Priest he laugh. He taken the piece out of the draw again. It a short barl 45 with that crisscross lines on the butt. Priest dont flip it around like a cowboy. He cool. He hold it in his big band like it somethin sweet and he smile at it.

It aint gonna smile back at you, Man. I say. An Priest he laugh an not lookin smash a roach under his heel. He say: Only 9 hundred and 99 thousan left in Harlem now, Man. I killin em all. I leavin rats an mice to the City but I killin the roaches myself.<sup>29</sup>

Questions such as the following could help students to realize the restrictions of a conventional alphabet. How does the writer indicate variations in the pronunciation of words? Are any unusual sound patterns presented? A further question—what do the speech patterns of Priest and the narrator tell us about these characters—could help students to appreciate the use of language to indicate personality and to see the economy of writing necessary if an author is to present his

28 Hugh Agee, *The Analysis of Student Talk: Classroom Possibilities for Dialect Study*, *English Journal* 61 (Sept. 1972): 881-893.

29 Warren Miller, *Cool World* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1959), p. 7.

characters in the limited space of a short story, novel or play. From here the teacher might move into specific questions about the vocabulary and syntax of each character.

Finally, while examining the dialects created by authors, students should learn to recognize eye dialect: the use of spelling errors to characterize illiterate or uneducated speech. However, since eye dialect does not represent a variant pronunciation it is not really a dialect.

Comic strips too provide numerous examples of dialect from the mountain dialect of Snuffy Smith to the cockney dialect of Andy Capp. By making slides of selected frames from such comics teachers can reproduce the dialect for all to read and discuss. Such a technique affords the teacher the advantage of built-in motivation as students are simultaneously amused and instructed.

Social dialects may be examined by students in much the same way as regional dialects. However, here the teacher must be especially careful to avoid stigmatizing a dialect. A discussion of the variations between working class and middle class dialects may tend to cause embarrassment to the student who discovers that he or his parents speak in a dialect that is not held in high regard. Throughout any discussion of dialect the teacher must emphasize the usefulness of all dialects and stress the importance of appropriateness in determining the variety of language that is used in a given situation. Role playing could be helpful here in making students aware that formal language is just as out of place at a football game as slang is in a valedictory speech.

English varies not only among regional and social groups within the United States but also among Americans and other English speaking people. For centuries a battle, sometimes serious, sometimes facetious, has waged between the two English speaking countries on either side of the Atlantic with each claiming his variety of speech to be superior. Students might profitably engage in a discussion of this struggle, noting the borrowings on both sides and the cultural differences that are responsible for retained differences.

Differences in spelling might be another aspect of this comparative study. Students might be asked to try their hand at providing American spellings for such words as cheque, cyder, odour, realise, tyre and centre. Interesting spelling lessons could develop from a look at such differences.

Differences in vocabulary are the most noticeable and probably the most interesting language differences for students to examine. Students might try providing American equivalents for British terms such as these: bonnet, wing lorry, minerals, ships lift, pram, caravan, dustman and call box.

Sources of written British speech are so numerous in American society today that the English teacher should have no trouble finding materials. Literature, newspapers, magazines, and even song lyrics could be brought into the classroom for analysis. Since a part of nearly every English curriculum is devoted to a study of British literature, it will no doubt be helpful for students to understand the general differences between British and American English.

Yet another area of language variation that deserves the attention of students and teachers is slang. Robert Pooley suggests that English teachers should reevaluate their attitudes toward this form.<sup>30</sup> This can be done in part if teachers will recognize that the creation of slang is the result of combining existing words, of shortening terms, or of blending or condensing joined words, and that these are the very same processes that are used to create legitimate new language. If appropriateness is accepted as a guide for usage choice and if effective communication is accepted as the chief goal of the language user, then teachers cannot condemn slang and dismiss it as vulgar or unsuitable. Rather, they must demonstrate to students the nature of slang, its usefulness, and its limitations, and help them learn to use words and phrases that are both appropriate and effective.

To accomplish these ends, a teacher might begin by providing students with a list of slang words that were used at the turn of the century or earlier. Below is a sample of such a list taken from *Slang Yesterday and Today* by Eric Partridge.

a bender	a drunken spree (1848)
a broad	a woman
a bummer	worthless, lazy man (1856)
a chopper	a machine gun or its operator (1925)
dummy up	to become silent (1920)
glad rags	best clothes (1914)
grass	asparagus (1919)
hit the hay	sleep in a barn (1880)
on the make	alert for money (1890)
to skunk	bert thoroughly (1848)

Students then could be asked for their own definitions, and the two lists could be compared. Working through a number of examples such as these should enable students to generalize about what slang is, where it comes from, and what happens to slang words. In this way, students can see for themselves that slang provides new names for

30 Robert Pooley, "Free Speech: How Free?" *English Journal* 61 (Oct. 1972): 1015-19.

everyday concepts, that it is often ingenious, picturesque, or amusing and that, occasionally, it offers some social commentary

Students might also become involved in preparing a dictionary of contemporary slang. This project would require them to classify and define terms and lead them to a better understanding of the form

**BI-DIALECTISM** In recent years linguists have expressed much concern for the speech of minority groups, especially blacks. Some linguists such as James Sledd, argue that any attempts to change the dialect of the black man either by modifying it or by adding a second dialect to it are simply acts of racial supremacy. Sledd contends that it is not his speech that is objectionable to middle-class white Americans, but the man himself. He proposes that the money, time, and effort that is being spent to produce bi-dialectal speakers be rechanneled into programs to develop an increased understanding of the lives and language of minorities.

On the other side of this question stand linguists such as Labov and McDavid who have been influential in developing programs to provide a second dialect for speakers of nonstandard English. Although linguists contend that all dialects are linguistically equal, it is clear that some dialects are more socially prestigious than others. The business affairs of this country are carried on by individuals who favor a particular way of writing and speaking. To enter this business world, the individual must generally master this variety of language. However, this task poses many problems. First of all, students must be motivated to want to learn this business or "Standard" English before any meaningful instruction can take place. Students must be made aware that this type of language will be useful to them and that the teacher in no way expects them to abandon their current way of speaking in favor of it. Secondly, effective methods must be used to help the student master the new dialect.

In the past, students were expected to learn standard English by filling in blanks in grammar and usage drills. Such methods, however, afforded little carry over into everyday use and more efficient approaches were sought. One promising new method is the use of audio-lingual or pattern practice drills.

These drills do not demand that students learn any grammatical terminology or usage rules. Instead, the students listen to and repeat patterns until they can be easily produced. These drills may take a variety of forms: students may respond as a class, in small groups or individually. Students may repeat a sentence exactly as it is given to them, or they may change it in specified ways. A drill involving simple substitution might go something like this:

Teacher: That is Daren's pencil. /Sam:



Students That is Sam's pencil  
 Teacher That is Sam's pencil /desk  
 Students That is Sam's desk

Although this method offers many exciting possibilities, it also imposes many demands on the teacher. He must prepare drills specifically suited to the needs of his class; he must continually work to make drills interesting for his students, and he must not expect instant returns for his energies. Since drills are usually used for a short time each day, usually five or ten minutes of the class period, results are often slow in coming.

## THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Throughout his high school years a student may be exposed to various aspects of the history of the English language for various specific purposes. While studying literature he might be introduced to the characteristics of the language of a particular period in order to facilitate his reading. John Simmons outlines a procedure to be used before introducing a student to the language of the Elizabethans. He says:

One worthwhile venture would be a preliminary study of Early Modern English. The teacher can choose representative passages from one or more of the plays and help the students to analyze their meaning and ways of presenting it. The broad thematic significance of the passage would not be at issue here; the peculiarities of the syntax, vocabulary, and metaphor of that era would be matters of major concern. Of importance also during these preliminary considerations would be the nature and frequency of Shakespeare's historical and mythological allusions. Within this activity requiring of students to create paraphrases of short passages in their own idiom could be helpful. The greatest seeming value of prior work with this unfamiliar form of English would be to introduce senior high students to certain processes of translation of syntactic and lexical irregularities.<sup>31</sup>

Vocabulary studies too, often include brief glimpses of the history of the English language. Students may be asked to explore the etymologies of words or to compile lists of words coming to English from foreign countries, ethnic groups, or special interest groups. Several aspects of this type of study might be particularly interesting to students. One would be a study of words that have unique stories

31 John Simmons "Shakespeare in the Boondocks" *English Journal* 57 (Oct 1968) 974

behind their creation, like sideburns, sandwich, or tantalize. Another would be a look at neologisms, new words that have recently come into the language. Students might be encouraged to bring in and discuss new words that they find in newspapers and magazines or that they hear on radio or television. In connection with the study of neologisms, students might also investigate acronyms, words formed from the initial letter or letters of a compound term, such as NOW or UNESCO.

Finally, the history of the English language is often presented in depth as a part of the language component of the curriculum. Such a study is valuable because it illustrates to students how greatly our language has changed. Even a brief comparison of passages from Old, Middle, and Modern English should suffice to make students aware of these changes. Further, these comparisons demonstrate the changes in usage that have occurred and thus help students to see that usage is not the result of permanent, fixed rules but that it varies from age to age. Recognizing that a particular usage such as the double negative was once acceptable should help students become more tolerant of the variations that occur today.

A concentrated study of the history of English might also include an outline of language families and an illustration of the relationship of English to other languages. To further illustrate these relationships, the teacher might provide games such as the following. Students could be given words from German, French, Italian, or Spanish and be asked to supply English equivalents. French words such as *longue, chaise, soupe, poeme* and *parc* or German words such as *haus, kotze, moen* or *mulch* might be used. Even peculiarities of English spelling might be explained as students consider words adopted from other languages.

To successfully carry out a study of the history of the English language, the teacher must seek to involve students in investigations that will lead to generalizations regarding the development of the language. Numerous lectures loaded with facts to be memorized might soon become very tedious.

## LANGUAGE SKILLS

Often, beginning English teachers are faced with a troublesome problem: they yearn to stimulate their students to write exciting creative bits of prose and poetry but find, alas, that they cannot write effectively because they cannot handle the mechanics of writing. Such matters as spelling and punctuation are certainly important concerns for students, but teachers are sometimes reluctant to devote precious classroom hours to such seemingly mundane matters. The solution to this problem lies in motivating students to discover their

own particular weaknesses and in helping students develop efficient and effective ways of eliminating their difficulties

**MOTIVATION** Students need to be aware that poor spelling or improper punctuation can block communication. Many misspelled words can distract the reader and cause him to lose sight of the ideas the writer intended to convey. Inaccurate punctuation may cause misreading and misunderstanding. Giving students several examples which illustrate how important mechanics can be should help to motivate them to further study. Consider for example the following two sentences

That girl thought the boy was an idiot  
That girl thought the boy was an idiot

The addition of two commas changes the meaning of the sentence a good deal. The little dots and squiggles known as punctuation often seem unimportant to students who use them or leave them out at whim. It is therefore up to the teacher to show students how they can make the difference between saying what one means and saying just the opposite.

Incorrect spelling too can distort the writer's message. The following sentence makes very little sense because the writer failed to spell correctly two common words.

Benjsmin always eats his diner at the local dinner

To further emphasize the importance of learning the rules of punctuation and mastering correct spelling, teachers might ask students to try to read several passages in which these conventions have been ignored. Deciphering a passage such as

ay cee knough wai tew emmpres yu u dew knott lyssin twoo nebudi  
whann hee tawkz youu doughnt heerr hymm whai doentt u moov  
tue ayn eyelandd

is frustrating and time consuming. Students should realize that standardized spelling and punctuation are not the result of sacred pronouncements but rather represent conventions that allow others to quickly and easily understand the writer's meaning. Hence the student too is obliged to use these conventions in order to aid his readers and communicate effectively his ideas and feelings.

A teacher's attitudes toward mechanics will obviously affect students' attitudes toward them. Negativism will beget negativism. The teacher who is constantly condemning and criticizing will soon face a dejected class with little desire to improve. Such critical practices .

may also lead to error avoidance. Students will choose short, easily spelled words instead of more difficult but perhaps more accurate terms or they may stick to simple sentence structures that can be easily punctuated to avoid the misplaced comma. To help students write more effectively, the teacher must point out their weaknesses and offer instruction in these areas, but at the same time, he should offer praise whenever possible. If the student feels he is making progress, he is more likely to continue working toward the mastery of mechanical skills.

Taking a positive attitude toward mechanics does not mean taking no notice of mechanical errors. One extreme has as many dangerous repercussions as the other. Allowing time to proofread written assignments, encouraging students to read aloud what they have written, and assisting students in using reference materials such as dictionaries and handbooks of mechanics can help to reduce careless errors that stand in the way of effective written communication.

**METHODS—SPELLING** By the time a student reaches high school he is expected to have mastered the basics of spelling. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Some students do not have an understanding of the relation between sounds and the graphemes that represent these sounds. When this occurs, it may be wise to provide students with a review of phonics and some work with syllabication and stress patterns. Today young children are blessed with the marvels of educational television which dynamically depicts the intricacies of our sound-letter system. Hopefully, with the continuation of such programs as "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company," students will have fewer spelling problems in their middle and high school years.

Selecting the words to be used in spelling lessons should not prove too difficult if the teacher keeps in mind the following guidelines. Words that are in common use should be given priority. Of what use is it to drill students on words such as *odiorbatic* or *geodesic*, when they will probably never write or read such terms? Words should be chosen because they have proved to be difficult for students to spell. Here teachers must distinguish between the actual and careless spelling error. Although a student may clearly understand the difference between 'their' and "there," he might, in haste, confuse these two words. In this case, emphasis on composition revision is needed, not a spelling lesson. Words should be presented in groups that illustrate the regularities of spelling. From such lists, students can inductively formulate their own rules for spelling. Once the regularities of spelling have been discussed, the exceptions may be presented. If the regularities are not presented first, the student must face the difficult task of memorizing every word that is presented to him. Whenever possible, spelling should be an individualized study. No

student should be subjected to time consuming drill and testing on words he already knows. While this point seems very obvious it has often been the practice of teachers to hand out lists of words and to require all students to work through these lists without bothering to find out how much they already know.

In addition to individualizing word lists teachers should also allow for individual approaches to learning spelling. To do this the teacher might suggest a number of common practices: saying the word, writing the word, tracing the word in the air, using the word in sentences, or spelling the word aloud. Each student could then try these methods and select those practices which work best for him.

Two other classroom techniques may prove useful in teaching spelling if they are used in moderation. One is the use of mnemonic devices. For particularly troublesome words the teacher might suggest or the student may develop such devices to aid him. If one has often been exposed to the delights of the lunchroom it is easy to remember that you never get fat eating in a cafeteria. Or perhaps recalling that onomatopoeia is a device that Poe might have used could help a student with this tricky word. However an overabundance of such devices could be just as overburdening as rote memorization. The other method is the use of games and puzzles. While these may be great for stimulating enthusiasm and motivating students they do not take the place of concentrated diligent study.

**PUNCTUATION—METHODS** One of the keys to successfully teaching punctuation is to show students that these marks are a means of representing pauses and stress patterns in written communication. To do this the teacher might ask a student to try reading aloud the same sentence punctuated three different ways.

You made that?  
You made that!  
You made that.

Each sentence has a very different meaning and requires changes in pitch and stress and yet the only differences among them are the punctuation marks at the end of each.

To help students relate the spoken form to the written one the teacher might have students work in pairs reading sentences or compositions to one another. Each student could then decide how his punctuation affected his partner's ability to easily read aloud what he had written. If his partner runs out of breath he would see the need to insert some punctuation. If equipment is available students might try putting their written compositions on tape. In this way too students could easily hear how well they had transformed verbal expression into a clear written form.

Unfortunately, not all punctuation difficulties can be handled in this manner. The use of such marks as semicolons, colons, or quotation marks often requires an understanding of the rules that govern particular constructions. Once again, however, it is possible for the teacher to proceed inductively. If given samples of various constructions, correctly punctuated, the student can write his own rules. Above all, as he prepares lessons on punctuation, the teacher should carefully select materials that will be interesting to his students. Pages and pages of textbook drills should be avoided. This can easily be done since every teacher has at his disposal student compositions, current magazines and newspapers, and even comic books from which to draw illustrative examples.

Although the study of spelling and punctuation may not be the most exciting part of the English curriculum, it cannot be ignored simply because it may be unpalatable to teachers or students. If students are to become effective communicators, they must master the intricacies of these systems. It is up to the teacher to provide motivation and to offer guidance and direction in these problem areas.

## THE LAST WORD

Today it is not necessary for the English teacher to feel confined to prescribing grammar rules or standard usage to students. Instead he has the freedom to explore with his students the exciting world of language that daily surrounds all of us. Neil Postman claims that the proper concern of the English teacher is 'the study of relevant language situations'.<sup>32</sup> If the teacher develops an awareness of the language around him, it will become easy for him to select those aspects that are important to students.

Language situations gathered from newspapers, magazines, films, television, daily conversation, and literature can all be brought into the classroom and used as a basis for discussing the structure, history, and variations of language and the meaning of words. With such an approach, the teacher can easily find in language study continual sources of delight for students.

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Pooley Robert C Free Speech How Free? English Journal 61 (Oct 1972) 1015-19 Pooley discusses the issues presented by language change and slang and concludes by offering six principles and attitudes toward language usage which include some guidelines for the use and avoidance of slang

Pooley Robert C Teaching Usage Today and Tomorrow English Journal 56 (May 1967) 742-45 Pooley discusses a usage opinion study done with Wisconsin teachers and he offers specific recommendations for the future teaching of English usage

Postman Neil and Weingartner Charles Language in Teaching as a Subversive Activity New York Dell 1969 pp 98-132 Postman and Weingartner indicate some of the concepts and strategies that they feel should be contained in a study of language in the schools

Postman Neil and Weingartner Charles Linguistics A Revolution in Teaching New York Delacorte 1966 The authors offer suggestions for new approaches and attitudes toward language study

Shuy Roger W Discovering American Dialects Urbana Ill NCTE 1967 This booklet provides a good basic introduction to regional dialects and could be used as a high school text

Shuy Roger W Discovering American Dialects Urbana Ill NCTE Journal 56 (Nov 1967) 1166-76 Slager discusses briefly the background of oral drills for nonstandard speakers He also describes some of the basic types of oral drill and provides examples of these types

Sledd James B Dialectism The Linguistics of White Supremacy English Journal 58 (Dec 1969) 1307-15 Sledd argues that educators are approaching the problems of nonstandard speech with the wrong attitudes and the wrong methods

Stewart William ed Non Standard Speech and the Teaching of English Washington DC Center for Applied Linguistics 1964 The articles contained here discuss problems and approaches to teaching to non standard speakers

Suhor Charles Pattern Practice We Bombed in New Orleans English Journal 60 (Dec 1971) 1221-24 Suhor explores three major problems with oral language drills and suggests ways they may be overcome

Thomas Cleveland Semantics Concepts for Secondary School English English Journal 49 (Mar 1960) 186-91 Thomas outlines important concepts in five general areas of semantics



Weingartner, Charles 'Semantics: What and Why' *English Journal* 58 (Nov. 1969) 1214-19. Weingartner presents a rationale for teaching semantics in the high school English classroom.

## ENGLISH AND THE NON-PRINT MEDIA

Non print media are certainly not new to the classroom. Many of the most traditional English teachers have used audio visual aids for years and there have always been creative teachers who found ways to use the popular media—comic books, movies, radio and television—to good advantage in their teaching. Indeed many of today's questions about teaching and using film were being answered in the *English Journal* and other teachers' publications in the 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>1</sup> It is a rare school today that doesn't have at least a modest supply of records, filmstrips, tape recorders, and access to a film library. And in virtually every school with an elective program at least one English course is devoted to the study of film and various other popular media.

Nevertheless, the uses of non print media in English vary considerably from school to school. Many teachers who use them in conventional ways, perhaps showing a filmstrip depicting the life and times of Mark Twain before studying *Huckleberry Finn*, still question whether contemporary popular media belong in an English program. Media advocates, on the other hand, assert that those media contain much of value—and in any case we must start where the students are. Others like David Holbrook see these media as essentially meretricious.

Our popular culture is often too often an enemy to art. Even at best it lacks the degree of sincerity we seek to promote in children. The mass culture of our mass production urban society is, it seems

1 Ken Donelson, "Reinventing the Wheel," *Media & Methods* 8 (Nov. 1971): 42-44.

doomed to be trivial—too trivial and it is certainly below the level of need and interest of the young people who leave our schools<sup>2</sup>

For Holbrook, and for many other English teachers, the popular media and "commercial entertainment" are mostly impoverished and crude influences which tend to exploit and desensitize their audience. According to them teachers who make extensive use of such materials rather than dealing with the best in contemporary art, music, and literature, fail to promote the sincerity, spontaneity, awareness, and liveliness of which their students are capable.

Another frequent objection to extensive use of non-print media concerns priorities. If English teachers are to do anything well, they cannot try everything, and many teachers contend that sufficient work with literature, language, and written and oral communication leaves little time for media. Despite such reservations, however, few teachers dispute the importance of non-print media in today's world, and an increasing number of English programs, textbooks, and teachers are giving media study a prominent place in the curriculum. The teacher who continues to think of non print media as mere entertainment or as a tool to be used only occasionally in the classroom is part of a rapidly diminishing minority. Electronic and non-print media demand a place in the schools simply because they already have a commanding place in society. They best fit themselves into the English curriculum because they represent an extension of our present concern with language and communication. There is no way that an English program can be adequate to the language needs of today's students if it considers the most powerful forces of communication in modern society peripherally if at all.

For the most part, the uses of non-print media in English classes can be categorized in one of three ways

- 1 as instructional aids used to motivate students, present information, or vary classroom activity,
- 2 as art forms, to be studied separately or in conjunction with literature or fine arts, or
- 3 as socio-linguistic phenomena studied generally as modes of communication affecting the beliefs attitudes perceptions and behavior of people in contemporary society

The first category encompasses most of the conventional classroom uses of non print media. The second and third categories contain a variety of practices and activities intended to develop students'

<sup>2</sup> David Holbrook, *The Secret Places* (University Ala. University of Alabama Press 1965) p. xiv

visual literacy or mediacy, their ability to use appreciate respond to and understand the effects of various media

For the student teacher entering a conventional school or classroom the first of these categories is probably the most immediately relevant. For teachers who can determine the course of study for particular classes or who are concerned with units on mass media or communication the second and third categories should be considered.

## MEDIA AS INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS

Despite their proven classroom potential the non print media are not panaceas. Simply playing some popular folk rock music will not automatically prepare students to read and discuss Wordsworth. Making a film or a slide tape presentation will not in itself improve students' writing and listening for several hours to a professional recording of *Macbeth* will not necessarily enhance students' appreciation of Shakespeare. The mere presence of media in the classroom will not insure more interest, cooperation or learning.

All media are not equally effective with all students and turning on a machine does not mean that a teacher can turn off his awareness of his students' reactions and responses. The filmstrip which worked so well with the honors class may be boring to the average class; the record which holds the attention of one group may stimulate horse-play in another. Just as it is advisable to stop or change a lecture which obviously isn't getting through, so it is sometimes sensible to stop a film or tape and go on to something else even when this means scrapping or postponing a week's worth of plans. Teachers using electronic media can put their students in the position of a passive audience rather than active participants in learning just as effectively as if they had lectured.

The content of a film or tape recording is not automatically made interesting or relevant because it comes from a machine rather than from a textbook or teacher. An electronic media presentation no less than a lecture has to pertain to what students want to do, be understood. When the pertinence and usefulness are apparent they begin to demand information from any source.

Students all of us want to read and talk about matters that involve us. It must have to do with experience. If there's a way of getting what I need that's more efficient than print fine. As long as what is coming over on these various tracks is something we want and need.<sup>3</sup>

Even though commercial non-print teaching materials have improved vastly in recent years, the teacher must still exercise care and judgment in selecting appropriate ones for use with his particular classes. An otherwise excellent instructional film may prove ineffective simply because the students pictured in the film are several years younger than the viewers. A dull, pedantic film strip or film isn't an improvement over a dull lecture, and an inept, heavy-handed documentary may do less to interest and involve students than a well-written essay.

**MISUSING MEDIA** Instructional aids which fail to use the potential of their medium will usually be ineffective. For example, a videotape of a man giving a lecture is, in most cases, a misuse of the media. Even the lecturer who is adept at making difficult subjects interesting in his classroom may be unable to generate similar interest when confined by a medium which cuts him off from his audience and fails to convey his personality and classroom presence adequately. Also, those presenting topics not of immediate interest to students must usually make greater use of a medium's potential. A group of trouble-makers might sit still for a videotaped lecture from a lawyer on what to do when you are arrested, but the presentation of a sonnet will probably require a greater variety of visual effects, camera work, and sounds if it is to hold their interest.

Inexperienced teachers most commonly misuse popular media by asking it to be a mere gimmick or attention-getter. Students are seldom deceived or amused when teachers try to sneak up on a lesson or assignment in this fashion, and they soon catch on to the implied message that the textbook literature or assignment is pretty hard to take without some sugar coating.

Media are also misused if brought into a classroom only to fill up a free class hour. Good films or recordings can, of course, provide experiences which are sufficient in themselves. But the teacher who uses them merely to keep the class quiet and entertained, or because he didn't have time to plan for the lesson, does justice to neither the material nor his students. He says, in effect, that media have nothing to do with the "real business" of the class; that the experience gained from film or sound recordings is somehow less important to school concerns than the usual classroom activities. Furthermore, as most teachers have learned, making good use of media requires as much careful planning as any other kind of lesson or activity. With non-print media, as with literature, it is usually desirable to begin with student responses, if they can be elicited, but the teacher who is prepared to do nothing more than ask, "Well, what did you think of it?" may wind up with a class full of bored, restless students and half the class hour to go.

Beginning teachers faced with a class of unruly or seemingly indifferent students may be strongly tempted to rely extensively on materials and methods which will keep the peace or spark some semblance of interest. Non print media can be very useful tools in creating a better classroom climate especially in schools where they are seldom used. But to use media for such purposes exclusively is to ignore their genuine educational potential. If a teacher intends to have his students listen to a record, watch a film, make a collage or compose a tape essay, he should have some idea what such activities are for, what difference these experiences will make to his students and how he can determine whether they benefited from them. Although delight, insight and sharpened awareness are viable objectives even if such responses are not discussed or articulated simply keeping students occupied or distracted for an hour each day is baby sitting, not teaching.

Teachers also misuse non print media if they pit them against or use them exclusively in place of the print media, thereby setting up false dichotomies for their students. Most perhaps all students today need experience with and understanding of both print and non print media. Visual literacy is not a substitute for written literacy and vice versa. Although in any given instance there may be no viable reason for preferring written expression to expression through film, collage or tape, the ability to communicate effectively in writing is still an advantage in our society. Similarly, the ability to comprehend ideas in print and to gain imaginative entry to written literature is no less desirable because students also need to understand tonight's TV news or the latest serious films and music. The English teacher who finds that his students are interested in and able to express themselves effectively in film or on tape is not relieved of a responsibility to help them toward literacy as well as mediacy.

**MEDIA IN LESSONS AND UNITS** Teachers use non print media to liven up a class by varying the routine, to convey information to motivate students by focusing their attention on and sparking an interest in a theme, work or skill and to provide a common experience to serve as a basis for discussion, writing and subsequent work. Because media can have a direct, visceral impact on many students who are not similarly moved by the printed or spoken word, teachers can often use films, graphics and tapes to achieve what print or a lecture cannot.

**Varying classroom routines** Selecting photographs to illustrate a poem, viewing the filmed version of *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, listening to Dylan Thomas's reading of *Fern Hill* or developing a tape essay on students' rights are all media activities which can vary the class routine for students. Most conventional classroom

activities have a media counterpart which may accomplish many of the same ends. For example

**Reading a short story** Students may view *The Hound, The Balloon Tree*, or *Mosque of the Red Death*, or listen to Basil Rathbone's reading of Conan Doyle's or Poe's stories

**Reading poetry** They may listen to poets such as Frost, Cummings, or Spender read their own poetry, view "cine poems" such as 'Glass', 'Omega', "Sky," or "Dream of the Wild Horses", or listen to the lyrics of recorded ballads or folk rock music

**Listening to a lecture** They may view films such as *Autumn Frost Country*, or *A tribute to Dylan Thomas*, view videotapes such as *Hunger in America* or selections from Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* series, or view sound filmstrips such as *Educational Audio Visuals* series on the lives, times and works of great poets and writers

**Reading a composition text** Students may view *Encyclopaedia Britannica* filmstrips such as 'Organizing Your Writing,' or the *Educational Audio Visual* filmstrip, 'Fundamentals of Writing' They may see the film 'Why Man Creates,' the overhead transparency lessons accompanying Ginn's *Writing Unit Lessons in Composition* or the *Nebraska Curriculum Development Center's The Christensen Rhetoric Program*

**Writing or speaking** Classes may make, for instance, a film, tape essay, collage, shooting script, or slide tape presentation of a poem<sup>4</sup>

When students are involved in using media, the classroom in many respects becomes a workshop: students use tools and manipulate objects, they move around and talk more freely, they involve themselves in projects which preclude traditional teacher domination, and the movement, talk, and activity lend an air of informality. Such activity creates a very different climate and physical social environment which may be particularly effective with students who are uncomfortable in formal classroom settings.

A teacher may also achieve some variety in more customary class routines by using media in lectures, recitations, discussions, and assignments. A poem may be shown by an overhead projector rather than a text or ditto. By using a projector, the teacher can control his students' reading of the selection, perhaps presenting it a line or two at a time and having them analyze each segment carefully before going on to the next. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, a teacher may use a tape or record of people speaking different dialects to liven up a lecture on that subject or may present a series of slides to

<sup>4</sup> For an extension of these comparisons see Liane Brandon, "Using Media Creatively in the English Classroom," *English Journal* 60 (Dec 1971) 1231-33

demonstrate the notion of point-of-view, illustrating through his subsequent questions how different students see them. A tape recording of a brief, unfinished story might be used to stimulate either a discussion on how the story should end or a writing assignment on the same theme. Paintings with a strong narrative element, such as Cézanne's 'The Card Players' or Jean Leon Gerome's 'The Duel after the Masquerade' might also be used to stimulate discussion or written work.

**Presenting information** In many cases, canned presentations which involve both pictorial and sound elements are better organized and make a more lasting impression on students than does a lecture or discussion—but not always. A knowledgeable and enthusiastic teacher can often succeed when a slick, professional presentation will fail. Students may be profoundly impressed by a popular teacher's obvious and enthusiastic delight in his subject, even when his presentation lacks the professional finish possible in commercial media.

**Motivating students** Perhaps the most common use of media today is as a bridge in more conventional work. Analysis of popular song lyrics often precedes work with printed poetry. Zeffirelli's film *Romeo and Juliet* introduces a study of the play's text. Consideration of television advertising leads to the writing of persuasive prose and argument. The difficulty in using new media to introduce or motivate conventional study and activities usually occurs when the teacher attempts to shift from one to the other. Enjoyment of a film or record, for instance, will not necessarily make reluctant students eager to analyze or discuss their reactions in the classroom, an absorbing film about Dickens' London will not enable a poor or reluctant reader to begin independent reading of *Great Expectations*. Even when the poetic lyrics of folk-rock music interest students and stimulate involved "literary" discussions, this interest does not always transfer to poetry contained in the anthologies. Using media will not in itself make dull material interesting, difficult material easy, or a poorly planned lesson a success. If a particular activity promises to be difficult or uninteresting, sugar coating its introduction may be less profitable than restructuring the activity itself.

Many transition problems can be overcome if the teacher is careful in selecting media which relate in direct ways to the materials and activities to follow, planning for their use in the lesson and working out various ways to make the transition. As in most aspects of teaching, the clearer the teacher's plan and purpose, the more likely he is to succeed. For example, merely bringing in a stack of magazines and telling students to find a picture and write a story about it may or may not stimulate good writing. At least until students are experienced in responding to visual stimuli, the teacher might better select a few particularly interesting pictures to demonstrate the process using



models of student writing, and go through the process himself, either writing a draft on the board or getting students to respond aloud to the picture<sup>5</sup>

**Introducing literary works** The usual transition from non-print media to a literary work is accomplished via their common theme the antiwar motif in the film *Toys* leads to the poetry of Wilfred Owen. The teacher can use *Toys* to focus students' attention on the topic, to stimulate discussion of the film-maker's intent, and to elicit students' feelings about war. Then the teacher can invite them to consider how Owen deals with the topic using another medium. Country and western music, usually considered too low-brow for use in schools, is almost totally preoccupied with the archetypal human situations and feelings dealt with in serious poetry. If a Nashville song writer can open up a topic to students and get them to articulate their concerns, they may be better able to understand and relate to the serious poet who attempts to deal with the theme on a more profound level. Paul Simon's '59th Street Bridge Song' ('Feeling Groovy') is not in the same league with Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," and Johnny Cash's "Sunday Morning Coming Down" is not equivalent to Shakespeare's Twenty-Ninth Sonnet, but the similarity in theme and tone make the transition plausible and suggest a path from where many students are to the place teachers want them to visit.

All of the traditions and heritages worth investigating have contemporary manifestations and the best way of beginning such investigations is to look at their contemporary presence. Puritan attitudes. The American Dream. Utopianism. Violence, Individualism. All can be approached through the daily newspaper, the song lyric, the advertisement, and the rest of popular culture.<sup>6</sup>

A letter printed in Ann Landers' column and written by a young person whose friend, 'a young man who had a great big wonderful world ahead of him' had committed suicide proves a very potent introduction to the reading of *Richard Cory*.

Points of comparison and contrast offer another way of making media transitions. For example, students might watch a filmed version of a Shakespeare play or a Dickens novel and then begin their reading of the text by looking first at key scenes they remember from the film.

5 See David A. Sohn *Pictures for Writing* (New York: Bantam, 1969) for a wealth of suggestions on the use of pictures to motivate and develop writing skills.

6 Arthur Daigon "English: A Three-Ringed Circus," *English Journal* 62 (Nov. 1973): 1119.

and comparing them to the text treatment. Students who have seen filmed versions of stories or novels, or who have heard recorded variations of works such as 'Richard Cory,' may be interested in considering how particular stories or poems might be presented in another medium. Are there characters or lines that could be left out? What dialogue should be stressed? Which scenes emphasized? Which eliminated? Could the subplot go? What would happen if the setting were changed radically, as Joseph Papp did in his television presentation of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*?

**Teaching Composition** Films, music, photographs, posters, or taped essays, as well as literature, can all serve as stimuli for written work. The student attempting to verbalize the experience of hearing an engaging musical selection or seeing an intriguing picture is confronting as real a writing problem as is the student trying to say something about a Wordsworth sonnet or a Faulkner novel. The non-print media may have certain advantages as writing stimuli, at least for students who are unresponsive to print or more conventional writing assignments. Media are often particularly useful in the initial stages of teaching composition, when the teacher is trying to get students to loosen up and develop some fluency, or just to get something down on paper.

In composition units students need not be limited to writing, speaking, or participating in discussions. Although the creation of tape- or photo-essays, collages, poetry readings, slide-tape presentations, shooting scripts, or films will not teach the skills of expository writing, these activities do provide experiences with processes and the discipline common to all forms of self-expression and creativity. When the means are available, there is no particular reason to limit students to the written or spoken word, any more than today's advertisers or news commentators feel themselves so limited.

Many students who are not particularly skilled or successful in written expression prove to be quite talented in other media. Expressing oneself in non-print media is certainly a legitimate (and marketable) skill, and the opportunity to develop and demonstrate such skills should be available to students. The English teacher who provides various opportunities for success in communication is much more likely to serve students well than the one who values and provides for written composition only. Given the convenience and accessibility of cameras and cassette tape recorders, there is really no reason to restrict students arbitrarily to written expression alone, even though teachers may still strive to improve that expression.

Use of media is most successful in unit projects which are designed for individuals or groups and which are at once learning experiences in communication and useful practical activities. To do the following exercises students must solve rhetorical problems and

master an impressive array of skills. However, the successful completion of the exercise can have genuine impact on the real world which the composition and speaking assignments do not have.

1. Creating a public-relations film about the school for use with PTA and other community groups is a possible extension of work with the language of advertising, the ethics of public relations, or the rhetorical concepts of ethos, audience, and persuasion.
2. Examining the school's attempts to communicate with students and the community, including the rhetoric of official publications, mimeographed sheets sent home to parents, and public statements by school officials, gives students the opportunity to evaluate the impact of various media on different populations.
3. Creating films and tapes of an artistic nature, or propaganda films on the school or community with particular (positive or negative) slants is a possible follow-up to the reading of Sinclair Lewis or Frank Norris, or an extension of work with persuasion, propaganda, or news-slanting.
4. Creating instructional media to entertain or teach younger children—a Sesame Street-type film or videotape conveying some concept such as "words mean different things to different people"; a discussion-stimulating tape presenting a mini-drama which creates an unresolved dilemma—involves a number of creative and expressive skills and would be a natural extension of a creative writing unit.<sup>7</sup>

Such activities, of course, require more time and involvement than do usual classroom uses of media and are perhaps more appropriate to classes focusing on media than to those using media only as aids.

**PLANNING FOR USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA** The following general guidelines are significant to the successful selection and use of media in the classroom.

In selecting media, consider the tastes and media experiences of the particular students. Despite much television viewing, students may be unprepared for such sophisticated works as Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* series. If it requires extensive introduction or effort to get

7. For additional projects students could undertake with film or videotape, see Chuck Anderson, "Things to Do with the Videotape Machine," *Media & Methods* 10 (Sept. 1973): 51 and 79. Among his seventeen suggested activities are: updating and revising a radio play for television, dramatizing a favorite poem, short story, or song for visual presentation, and making thirty-second video collages consisting of no fewer than ten related shots on a particular theme or topic.

students to understand a record film or tape it should be used as the focus of a lesson or unit—like a major literary work—rather than as an aid or supplement. Beginning teachers frequently assume mistakenly that the media popular on college campuses will be equally familiar to or popular with secondary students. It is sometimes difficult for student teachers to realize that just a few years ago many seem like ancient history to a junior high school student or a high school sophomore.

Another consideration in choosing media is the students' probable school experience with those particular selections. Especially in schools where media are widely used, students may tire of repeated showings of certain films and records. Therefore the teacher should try to insure that he will not be going over materials which are already too familiar to generate much interest or enthusiasm.

Preview whenever possible. Although it is usually advisable to build media lessons around students' responses, teachers will find it helpful to consider in advance the lines a discussion may follow and the activities which might flow from a particular presentation to learn its potential well enough to see alternative possibilities. If a class discussion doesn't work out, are there group or individual activities which can be substituted for it, thereby avoiding the possibility of simply dropping the subject and going on to other work? This is especially true with a class which has had little experience in responding freely to a medium or one which still expects the teacher to do all the talking or questioning. In such cases, what did you think of it? may elicit little more than mumbled general judgments. In previewing a film, record, filmstrip, or tape for class use, the teacher should pay particular attention to those aspects most likely to create problems for his students, most apt to open up interesting lines of thought and discussion, and most likely to be noticed or appreciated.

Do not overtax students with unfamiliar media. Unless students are accustomed to listening to poets' recordings of their work, plan to play only one or two short readings rather than an entire record of a long piece. For example, Frost's *Stopping by Woods* or *Mending Wall* may be more appropriate than all of *The Death of the Hired Man*. A few well-chosen scenes from a recorded Shakespeare play may be more effective than an entire act.

Plan for alternatives. The teacher who is unprepared to do anything but show a film or whose lesson hinges upon a record can find himself in difficulty when the film fails to arrive on time or the projector or record player is unavailable.

Consider the introduction of the material. One index of a presentation's appropriateness is the amount of preparation necessary for using it. If a film is itself being used as introductory background material for a unit or literary selection, it should not need extensive

lectures to be understood Especially with films, it is generally advisable to say as little as possible beforehand, some teachers habitually talk a film (novel, poem, record) to death before using it

However, alternatives to simply showing a film or playing a record with little or no preliminary comment can be used Giving a brief resume, pointing out things to look or listen for (especially if the selection is long and cannot be stopped or replayed), or conducting some form of bridging activity to establish a framework for the selection or to link it to students' interests and concerns may be effective A teacher might develop a bridging activity for a film such as *Refiner's Fire*, for instance by asking students to build a word collage on the word conformity Study guides calling attention to certain features and perhaps posing questions to be answered later are often used to prepare students for a particular selection Study guides and bridging activities can be useful, but they have the disadvantage of directing students' views toward certain aspects of the presentation, in effect demanding that they concentrate on those features which the teacher finds important rather than developing their own unique reactions A somewhat less prejudicial activity explored earlier in the book which is especially useful with dramatic presentations, is to have students role-play a situation from the selection before it is seen or heard

Consider variations in the presentation itself Generally, the media selection should be allowed to speak for itself and should not be interrupted However, this is not essential Sections of a film or record can be replayed to provide emphasis or time for special attention it can be stopped and students can be asked to consider their perceptions or speculate about an ending This is particularly effective when seeing the film *Block Thumb* where viewers often make the same mistaken assumptions about the black character as the white liberal in the film does

Consider what to do at the conclusion Sooner or later the record, film or tape ends What happens then? Most teachers feel that just providing students with the experience is not enough they must then help them to do something with it Likewise most although not all, students expect such help The teacher may choose a whole class group, or individual activity he may lecture lead a discussion or have a student lead the discussion he may ask predetermined questions to lead the discussion in particular directions or he may base the discussion on student responses Employing an image-sound skim is one way of beginning such a response-centered discussion First the teacher asks his students to state what images sounds words, or phrases impressed them the most Then he builds a discussion around his students' statements If students are reticent a teacher may ask

them first to write out five statements or questions about their experience or—if they have had some experience responding to the particular medium—he may ask them to write out their impressions of or feelings about the presentation. As an extension of discussion the teacher may ask his students to create their own media presentation to role play or dramatize some aspect or theme from the presentation or to read a thematically similar poem or short story. The amount of teacher direction necessary will vary from class to class and will depend on the teacher's purposes in using the media, the effectiveness of the presentations themselves, and the students' experience in responding to media. In general, the most successful activities result when media lessons are built around students' responses and use their observations, their impressions, and their questions to generate further questions and perception.

**SOURCES OF MEDIA** Few teachers are far removed from sources of instructional media. Surrounded as he is by magazines, posters, photographs, films, television, radio, comic books, and records, he will have access to visual and aural aspects of our culture even if he teaches in a school with a limited budget. Even without elaborate instructional materials centers, film libraries, or a budget for rentals, most teachers can do an adequate job of obtaining useful material.

**School and community resources.** Many school art departments have slide sets showing the works of famous painters and details from those paintings. Teachers can use such slides to sharpen students' powers of observation by first showing the whole painting, asking students questions about its details, and then checking their answers by showing detail shots. These slides can also be used to stimulate discussion and writing, just as music frequently is. Music teachers can often suggest and provide appropriate recorded background music for a taped reading of poetry or music to stimulate creative writing.

Area television and radio stations may be willing to lend video tapes or audiotapes of old commercials which can be analyzed by a class studying the language of advertising or persuasive rhetoric. Colleges and universities may have audio-visual services which rent films and other media. Many businesses such as the phone company, service organizations such as the police department, and governmental agencies have public service films which can be examined for rhetorical effectiveness and film technique. The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission<sup>8</sup> has catalogues of free and inexpensive films.

Even communities in remote areas frequently have access to resource libraries with film, record, and picture collections. Librarians

may be able to supply teachers with catalogues describing such media and to assist them in booking items for classroom use

**Creating instructional media** Of course, the teacher need not depend exclusively on commercial sources for instructional materials. It is not technically difficult to compose a tape-essay on student concerns which can be used to provoke discussion or to serve as a model for student tapes. Nor is it extraordinarily complicated to develop a slide presentation on some subject, to make interesting overhead transparencies illustrating some linguistic concept, or to make a short film.<sup>9</sup> Teachers should also consider asking students to help in such enterprises. Many of them are surprisingly skilled in the technology of audio recording, photography and film, and there is an obvious learning opportunity available to students who attempt to understand a concept, skill, or literary selection well enough to translate it into an instructional package, whether a tape recording, slide presentation, or just a bulletin board display. Roland Barth underscores the importance of student involvement, noting that "How the materials arrived in the classroom is every bit as important in their productive use as their presence."

A classroom filled overnight with expensive, manufactured materials deprives both teacher and student of the opportunity, responsibility and excitement which comes from constructing their own materials of scrounging materials of discovering and exploring new and multiple uses for old nonstructuring equipment.<sup>10</sup>

**Publications** The following publications are particularly useful to teachers who wish to know what is available in non print media

- 1 The 'Teaching Materials' and "Multi Media" columns in the *English Journal* regularly include reviews of commercial non-print media packages. Indices of the reviews of filmstrips and recordings have been published in the December 1966 and January 1973 issues of the *Journal*. The January 1974 issue is devoted exclusively to recent and new teaching materials: print, non print and multi media. The *Journal* also includes articles on the uses of various non print media. They are currently indexed under

9 *Media & Methods* contains occasional how to articles for teachers and students interested in creating their own instructional media and art supply and photography stores can often provide needed materials and useful pointers. For a wealth of specific suggestions on media creation and use in the classroom see *Doing the Media* an idea book from The Center for Understanding Media 75 Horatio Street New York NY

10 Roland S. Barth *Open Education and the American School* (New York: Galahon 1972) p. 214

- Audio-visual/Media/Technology and Film Study in the annual subject index included in the December issues
- 2 *Media & Methods* (published monthly September through May) is probably the best known and most widely read innovative publication for secondary school teachers. It includes frequent annotated lists of new short films a monthly *Telelog* of upcoming television specials and regular reviews of new methods and teaching materials in a *Mediabag* column
  - 3 The American Library Association's publication *The Booklist* (published twenty three times annually) includes critical reviews of some 1800 filmstrips short films records tapes transparencies slide sets and multi media kits each year
  - 4 The National Information Center for Educational Media (NICEM) University of Southern California University Park Los Angeles California 90007 publishes and regularly updates a series of indexes to non print media including indexes to educational records 16 mm films audiotapes videotapes overhead transparencies and 8 mm cartridges
  - 5 NCTE's annual catalog *Resources for the Teaching of English* lists maps filmstrips and recordings as well as books and monographs which deal with media and are available from them
  - 6 Flossie L Perkins *Book and Non Book Media* (Champaign Ill NCTE 1972) is an annotated list of indices and publications which review and list media available for use in schools. A valuable resource for materials centers and teachers dealing extensively in media it is probably not as useful to most English teachers as are the periodicals cited above
  - 7 In spring of 1974 NCTE published the *NCTE Guide to Teaching Materials for English Grades 7-12* a helpful resource dealing primarily with print based materials
  - 8 An annotated list of one hundred short films for the English class is included as Appendix B to this text

In addition to the periodicals cited above several others are of interest to anyone using or studying films in school. See is particularly useful to secondary school teachers using films. *Take One* is a publication about film with more general appeal. Especially for teachers interested in short films the free catalogs provided by such producer distributors as Pyramid Films<sup>11</sup> and Contemporary McGraw Hill Films<sup>12</sup> provide extensive annotated listings of films with sufficient descriptions to permit teachers to make tentative judgments about

<sup>11</sup> Box 1048 Santa Monica Calif 90406

<sup>12</sup> 330 West 42nd St., New York NY 10036



their usefulness to particular classes or units. The Film Review Index<sup>13</sup> the film counterpart to Book Review Digest indexes evaluative and critical film reviews from all major audio visual publications.

Most beginning teachers feel that they have neither the time nor the energy to investigate media sources once they begin work and before they begin they may question the usefulness of investigating materials and hardware which may not even be available in their school. Nevertheless the teacher who comes to his work familiar with a variety of instructional media and who knows how to use them in his teaching has a distinct advantage over the teacher whose only resources are his textbooks and his wits. Many student teachers who receive high ratings on the basis of their creativity and innovative teaching are in fact benefiting from their industry in learning to use a broad range of materials. While on a college campus where materials and professional help are available the prospective teacher is well advised

- 1 to become familiar with as many short films commercial tapes sound filmstrips and multi media packages as possible
- 2 to learn to operate such hardware as
  - tape recorders and cassettes
  - slide projectors
  - filmstrip projectors
  - overhead projectors
  - opaque projectors
  - 8 mm and 16 mm motion picture projectors
  - film and tape editors
  - 8 mm and 16 mm motion picture cameras
  - videotape equipment
  - 8 mm cartridge projectors
  - equipment to make Diazo transparencies
  - drymount presses and
  - terminals for computer assisted instruction
- 3 to learn the processes necessary
  - to make black and white and color transparencies
  - to make overlays for overhead projector transparencies
  - to make transparencies from printed materials
  - to make color life transparencies
  - to laminate pictures
  - to use lettering sets and graphics equipment and
  - to mount slides

<sup>13</sup> This index has been published quarterly since 1970 by Audio Visual Associates Box 324 Monterey Park California 91754

## MEDIA AS SUBJECT MATTER

Beyond their use as instructional aids non print media are increasingly studied as subject matter in English and communication courses. Particularly since the advent of Marshall McLuhan's popular and controversial studies of media in the 1960s<sup>14</sup> there has been a steady increase in the number of elective courses, units of study, books, textbook chapters and periodicals devoted to mass media, popular culture, television, film making and film study. The popularity of media courses among students, the enthusiasm of teachers and the attention focused on media study by the popular press and professional journals have combined to create something approaching a media cult among many English teachers. As with all such movements, media study has produced professional interest, some spectacular successes, a number of excesses, considerable controversy and a period of reflection and reaction.

In some cases media study has been little more than an interesting diversion for students. Parents, administrators and many English teachers become understandably uneasy when they see inarticulate and marginally literate students spending all of their time in English class viewing films, listening to records, making tapes and collages and reacting to these experiences in a superficial, haphazard manner. In other cases teachers attempting to make media courses academically respectable have resorted to busy work and the narrow, dull pedantry which is often associated with the study of literature. Their students memorize historical information, read encyclopedic works about media and learn long lists of esoteric terms and formulas.

**CONSIDERATIONS IN TEACHING MEDIA** Just as a student may study a literary selection as an historical artifact, an example of particular linguistic behavior, an art form or an aesthetic rhetorical stimulus which creates particular effects on people, so may he approach non print media in many different ways. Teachers of media too use a variety of approaches to achieve a variety of objectives. For example, most media study in English has been conducted on the pattern of the New Criticism approach to literature and emphasizes close reading and analysis of content. In contrast to this approach Marshall McLuhan stresses the nature and impact of the medium itself (the medium is the message), pointing students' attention to the fact that print, film, radio, television and tapes all have different

<sup>14</sup> *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1962). See also Gerald Emanuel Stearn, ed., *McLuhan: Hot & Cool* (New York: Dial, 1967) and Ted Palmer, "The Gadfly and the Dinosaur," *English Journal* 58 (Jan. 1969): 69-74.

effects on human perceptions and behavior, even when the content conveyed is ostensibly the same

Therefore, one of the central issues of media study in the schools has been whether or not they require new teaching approaches. Articulate and devoted students of film, for instance, have been particularly vocal in their insistence that teachers not do to cinema what has too often been done to other school subjects. As George C. Stoney says about teaching film in higher education, "I have this one great fear that we will finally make it so acceptably academic that it will become as dull and dead as almost every other subject in the liberal arts curriculum."<sup>15</sup> James F. Scott notes that for many students "the film is one of the few remaining refuges of the unstructured spontaneous response," and argues that

it would be much better to leave cinema out of the curriculum than to include it as only another subject for which we compose hand books and draw up outlines and which we then chop into hunks that will fit between one bell and another.<sup>16</sup>

Whether he teaches media as a separate course, a discrete unit, or an integrated part of a larger study, the teacher is faced with many of the same problems and decisions he faces in teaching any subject and it is not surprising that he will resolve these problems in his own characteristic manner. The didactic teacher, primarily concerned with conveying knowledge and skills, will probably begin by gathering and arranging in a more or-less systematic fashion, media information to pass on to his students. The heuristic teacher, who stresses learning and discovery procedures rather than subject matter, will characteristically begin by organizing exercises, problems and activities which will bring students into contact with various media in ways intended to make them explore, question and derive their own generalizations. The unimaginative teacher will probably make of media study the pedantic routine which critics fear, the creative teacher will not.

Every teacher's problems and issues are similar: how to help particular students to learn about media and to what end? What are his objectives in dealing with media? What content materials and activities will focus attention on media? What will work with his students? How can he and they determine when the objectives have been achieved? There is no reason to believe that there is one best way to teach media. There are different ways to answer each of the questions

15 Quoted in James F. Scott, *Film as an Academic Subject: Reservations and Reminders*, in G. Howard Poteat, ed., *The Complete Guide to Film Study* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1972), p. 190.

16 *Ibid.* pp. 190-191.

a teacher must consider regarding subject matter and method, and this is as true of media as it is of any other subject

Although they usually possess the 'basic skills' students vary in their ability to enjoy, comprehend, and respond to media. This is a deceptively obvious observation. Everyone recognizes that the ability to read a stop sign or comic book does not necessarily indicate an ability to read Dickens or Shakespeare but teachers sometimes assume that the ability to watch 'Gunsmoke' indicates an ability to comprehend sophisticated televised drama or that anyone who enjoys some records can enjoy and analyze his responses to all records.

Media are real world phenomena and are taken for granted by many students. As with other aspects of the everyday world most students are casually familiar with media, they see no apparent mystery as they may in math, foreign languages, or great literature. Consequently, students may believe there is nothing much to be learned. Motivating students to question and study things they already 'know' may be considerably more difficult than involving them in a thoroughly unfamiliar subject. Students who view film merely as entertainment, for instance, may resent a teacher's attempt to deal with it as art or as a significant new language.

There is no traditional established curriculum in media. Although increasing numbers of interesting and informative media textbooks exist, and although most cover to some extent the historical development and terminology of various media, nevertheless because their study is relatively new in secondary schools, teachers are seldom pressured to cover specific content or develop particular skills simply because "that's the way it's always been done." Furthermore, beyond historical data and terminology, there is little in the way of hard knowledge or established theory about media and its effects which warrants the demand that "every student must know this." Among other things, this means that the teacher has considerable freedom to choose his own approach and subject matter, and that the process of probing and questioning media is as valid as conveying set information about them.

Media study requires more advanced scheduling than most conventional units and courses. Films and videotapes must often be ordered far in advance. Hardware must be scheduled for use. Media production such as film making requires materials and budgeting. Because of such considerations a teacher must give considerable thought to the sequence of instruction, particularly if a media unit is to be sandwiched in between other units in a course of study.

**OBJECTIVES IN MEDIA STUDY** Media may be taught for many of the same reasons literature or language is taught: to increase knowledge, hone skills, and develop reasoned attitudes. On a general level,

media study may be justified, as literature often is, as contributing to students' personal growth and self-awareness. Great films, like all great art, have a humanizing influence on people, making them more keenly aware of the world and sympathetic toward their own and others' motivations and actions. Like writers and composers, today's film- and record makers create imaginative symbolic constructs of the world which both reflect and influence our perceptions of reality. In films and records, as in books, there is a great deal which is ephemeral and does not deserve serious study, but there is also much which can be defended, as Shelley defended poetry, as "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." At a rather abstract level, then, the teachers' objective is to make the best in media accessible and familiar to his students and to enable them to derive benefits from them.

By studying media as socio-linguistic phenomena and developing an awareness of the role its new languages play in human affairs, students can gain greater sensitivity to and control over media's effects. For example, the student who relies on television as his sole source of news should realize how superficial his knowledge of current events will be, and how much real power he inadvertently grants to those who control the medium. Similarly, students should become aware of the extent to which the popular media can and do influence people's values, roles, views of "the good life," and their very identities.

With media blasting away at kids to the point of electronic numbness—a terrifying assortment of stimuli bombard young people to adopt this life style—try this: be this, do that—but too often only on the superficial level of changing clothing, deodorants, or soda.<sup>17</sup>

In actual practice, teachers are usually guided by somewhat more specific objectives such as the following:

They wish to make students more critically aware of an important aspect of their environment. Achieving this may involve merely insuring that students have been exposed to a variety of media in such a way that they focus their attention on and give some consideration to it. It may involve presenting information about or encouraging students to inquire into less obvious aspects of particular media. "How much freedom of choice does a local television station have in the programs it shows from the national network?" Who, exactly, determines the censorship ratings of films? What criteria do the raters use? How much time are radio stations required to give to program content? How much can they allow commercials? One means of enabling students to see beyond the surface of media

is to increase their repertoire of responses by pointing out through questions and discussion that there is more to see and say about a medium than that it is there. This involves seeking out the aspects of a medium or its content which one may talk about and learning an appropriate vocabulary for such talk. At its simplest level such awareness involves a kind of verbal confidence and competence knowledge that one is able to understand and discuss media issues and ideas in a knowledgeable way. Fulfillment of this objective is often an important by-product of students doing media making films producing tapes or whatever.

Teachers hope to increase the range of media which students can enjoy and understand. Their approach may be through developing critical awareness and skill through encouraging students responses to various media or through exposure to increasingly sophisticated material. As in any attempt to improve taste or develop appreciation the teacher is really quite limited in what he can accomplish. Perhaps the most he can do is to insure that students have the opportunity to experience work with and consider a variety of media to select media content which is appropriate to the students interests and concerns and stress the relationship of medium and content to students lives.

Teachers may try to develop an attitude of fearful appreciation toward media. By considering the ways media influence individuals and society and are influenced by them students can gain a greater concern for such matters as programming censorship and the licensing and ownership of public media as well as a greater awareness of the need for caution in responding to media. As McLuhan points out media have a powerful influence on people's perceptions beliefs attitudes values and behavior and to avoid being manipulated by them people must develop knowledgeable and critical attitudes. In the words of Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner

The way to be liberated from the constraining effects of any medium is to develop a perspective on it—how it works and what it does. Being illiterate in the processes of any medium (language) leaves one at the mercy of those who control it.

To achieve this objective teachers must direct student attention to the media themselves as well as their content. Television has an impact on people's lives and perceptions regardless of the programs they watch and students might well consider the social and personal effects of various other popular media especially the electronic ones which have been developed in the past few decades.

**CRITICAL APPROACHES TO MEDIA STUDY** Despite the important differences between print and non-print, literary and linguistic studies can be used to suggest a variety of ways to approach the teaching of media. Whether a teacher is organizing information to present to students developing activities and exercises intended to focus their attention and inquiry, or merely observing and supporting his students' attempts to deal with media in their own way, the following five categories of literary criticism<sup>19</sup> offer useful guidelines.

**The moral approach** Dealing primarily with the content conveyed by the medium, a teacher can lead students to consider its moral effects on society and individuals, and the moral function of the content as a criticism of life. He might, for instance, examine the human values reflected in and affected by such television shows as "All in the Family" or "Maude," or the violence in feature films such as *The French Connection* or *The Godfather*, or in television programs intended for children. Questions of censorship and the relationship of the new media to the so-called revolution in morality are concerns of this critical approach. At a more sophisticated level, teachers might ask students to consider the standards and criteria for determining the intrinsic worth of a particular work and whether it is indeed possible to specify such standards.

**The psychological approach** This approach may illuminate the relationship between the artist, producer, or director and his work; may lead to an analysis of the work itself and a psychological interpretation of a character, or may gauge the psychological impact of a work on its audience. The study of the ways in which actions and words reveal and influence the psychology of audience, character, and artist is one closely related to the concerns of adolescents seeking to understand themselves and others.

**The sociological approach** The interrelationship of media and society is a particular concern of critics such as Marshall McLuhan. Following him, students may consider how the contents of various media reflect the culture in which they were produced and the way that media themselves influence society. For example, students could investigate the differences between popular music and films in the 1950s, late 1960s, and the present to see what they reveal about the times. They might consider such questions as whether or not an examination of television programs would give beings from another planet an accurate view of human life. They could be asked to speculate on the effects of removing various media from the environment, or to consider the probable effects of media changes forecast

19 Adapted from Wilbur S. Scott, *Five Approaches to Literary Criticism* (New York: Collier, 1962).

for the future or the role of media in a utopian society. However, as does the psychological approach, a purely sociological one may at times ignore the medium itself and concentrate too exclusively on the social milieu.

**The formalistic approach** Like New Criticism in literature, this approach focusing almost exclusively on content and its presentation in various media seems to have had the greatest impact on media study. Teachers adopting this approach would wish to direct their students' attention to elements of form—color, juxtaposition of images and sounds, music or spatial composition—and content—theme, tone or subject. Matters outside the work itself are not considered or are of secondary concern. However, this approach may become overly intellectual and it requires considerable analytical skill and the ability to articulate structural relationships.

**The archetypal approach** Related to each of the other critical approaches, the archetypal emphasizes the relationship of content to significant cultural and mythological patterns. Much commercial entertainment and advertising, for instance, is related to mass audiences through the use of very basic story patterns and current social mythology: the good guys wear white hats and get the girl; rugged physical appearance is indicative of masculine virtue; material possessions are a valid index of success and happiness. Moreover, as many critics have pointed out, the media not only use myths, they help to create them. Contemporary views of marriage, sex and family roles, success, justice, authority and the good life among other things are shaped by the various media. By examining these media, students may learn to see and talk about various cultural myths to which they and others respond and to examine critically some of their assumptions previously thought to be beyond question.

**RESPONSE CENTERED APPROACH TO MEDIA STUDY** The various critical categories just discussed suggest aspects of media to be investigated. Another approach is to build media study around the student response. By encouraging them to extend their repertoire of responses—to observe, question and comment on more aspects of the phenomena than they do originally—the teacher can increase their capacity to deal with a wider range of media experiences. The following response categories developed by Alan Purves<sup>20</sup> suggest the range

<sup>20</sup> Purves's categories were originally developed with reference to literary responses. They are described briefly in the *Illinois English Bulletin* 59 (Jan 1972): 12-13. For a more extensive discussion of student responses, see Alan C. Purves and Richard Beach, *Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests and the Teaching of Literature* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1972).



of ways a student might react to or comment upon a particular medium or its content

**Analytic synthetic** The student comments on the structure of the selection examining its parts as they relate to the whole

**Interpretational** The student considers the meaning of the work

**Classificatory** The student considers the genre of a selection and its similarities to and differences from other works

**Contextual** The student views the work historically noting the relationship of a film comic book radio show or record to the times in which it was produced or to the lives of the directors or artists who produced it They also study the critical history of the selection

**Personalistic** The student relates the media experience to his own life and feelings what associations does the record arouse what attitudes or pictures of reality does a film or commercial create what judgments or feelings does a work call forth?

**Evaluative** The student judges the worth of a particular work or considers the criteria by which it is to be judged

A first step in initiating a response centered approach might be to encourage open discussion of a medium by using a device such as the sound image skim described earlier The teacher could occasionally suggest questions or lines of inquiry and gradually introduce appropriate technical terminology into the discussion For instance in film study such terms as shot scene cut fade dissolve pan and montage become essential for analytic synthetic responses After students have developed some facility in discussing the media the teacher may vary the procedure by requesting written critical essays to serve as a basis for the discussions A simple variation of the response pattern is to assign a student to begin the discussion of a particular media presentation He may start with a comment a question a short quiz or an activity so long as it stimulates student responses to the medium

**GETTING STUDENTS INVOLVED** Whatever his objectives and general approach the teacher's success in teaching media depends ultimately on what happens or fails to happen in the classroom He may of course interest students and generate learning merely by the forceful stimuli of the media he brings in or by a series of engaging and provocative lecture recitation sessions More likely success will be achieved through activities such as the following which involve students in more active participation

**Focusing attention** Several methods might be used to focus students attention on media A teacher might begin by posing particular media problems for students to solve individually or in groups he

might ask them to arrange a set of still photographs to create a particular effect, to decide on the appropriate sequence for three musical selections to be played on a radio program, to develop a shooting script for a short film, or to determine which media a manufacturer should use to advertise products for a particular market. Another method is simply to begin using films, records and other media in class following the same teaching pattern established for literature study, if that pattern has been successful.

Using a more 'academic' approach the teacher could begin by asking students to list on the chalk board all the media they can think of and then to group them into categories they consider appropriate. When the list is complete, the teacher might survey the class to find which media the students themselves use for entertainment or information, and which ones their parents use. Students might then be asked to plan and conduct a survey of some other population—second graders, retired people or local tradesmen—to determine their uses of media for entertainment and information. In a sophisticated extension of this survey, students might examine the most frequently used medium, asking what picture of reality a person would have if he relied exclusively on it.

Students who have already learned to work in groups might develop charts of media uses and limitations, pointing out, for example, how various media include or exclude certain topics. A comparison of news media might demonstrate their degrees of over-simplification or differing proportions of time space, or emphasis given to particular types of stories.

A more elaborate and open ended scheme is the creation of a media environment in the classroom. Posters on the walls, projectors set up to show films into cardboard cartons, a television set or videotape player with listening jacks, a transistor radio, a record player and tape recorder with individual earphones, a table piled high with magazines and newspapers, another with comic books, and another with photographs and ads from magazines. After letting students make themselves at home in this environment for several days the teacher could ask them to record how they spent their time and what questions they can generate concerning the experience.

**Promoting inquiry** To promote inquiry into the nature and effects of media the teacher might play the "what if" game suggested in Teaching as a Subversive Activity, asking, for instance, 'what if' there were no tape recorders, whose life would be affected in some way? He could then work back through time until he had removed all common non-print media. After each "removal," he would ask his students how their own lives or the life of society would be changed. For instance, after TV goes what would people do with their time? How would their houses be rearranged? Would there be any ad-

vantages? A variation of the "what if" game is to consider the effects of having to rely on non print media exclusively, as in the society of Fohrenheit 451, or having all television programming controlled by one government official

Students may also be introduced to media inquiry indirectly by focusing discussion first on a larger problem such as how people receive information or find out about things in our society, or how they decide among candidates or competing products. What would they think of someone who said, to paraphrase Will Rogers, "all I know is what I see on the television"? A teacher might also ask, in a dictatorship such as Hitler's Germany or that portrayed in 1984, what exactly must the dictator control if he is to maintain power? Any serious examination of students' values, their beliefs about the way things are, and their role stereotypes can usually lead into a discussion of the media which have influenced their views and attitudes

Just as creative writing can be used to increase students' receptivity to and appreciation of literature, so media production is often an excellent method of encouraging media study. Students who have themselves tried to make a film, develop a slide tape presentation, or create a documentary are much more sensitive to the artistry of others and to a medium's limitations and advantages. The relatively limited tasks of making a radio or television commercial or creating a short film which evokes a particular mood soon brings students into contact with a wide range of provocative issues and problems. Satirizing or parodying various popular media can also lead to a more critical awareness of the phenomena usually taken for granted.

**Discussing media** The Hilda Taba discussion technique suggests a useful pattern for classroom teacher directed lessons on particular records, films, or tapes.<sup>21</sup> The technique is intended to help students make sense of sensory data by articulating the relationships among them, organizing them into conceptual patterns, and making and testing inferences and generalizations drawn from the data. The key to success with the Taba strategy is to take a nonjudgmental stance; the teacher must draw out and listen to student responses, not evaluate or pass judgment on them. The strategy consists of four main steps: (1) Recalling data. Here the teacher can ask each student to name some detail he most vividly remembers from a particular presentation (an image, sound or shot for instance). (2) Drawing inferences from the data. Students infer the feeling behind a particular action or phrase and give their reasons for making the inference. (3) Relating discussion to students' own lives. (4) Making generalizations.

21 See Robert L. Trezise. *The Hilda Taba Teaching Strategies in English and Reading Classes*. *English Journal* 61 (Apr 1972): 577-80.

based on discussion. As in all student centered approaches the Tabla strategy emphasizes the student's interpretation of the data not the teacher's.

## MEDIA TECHNOLOGY AND TOMORROW'S ENGLISH TEACHER

In the coming decade teachers can expect to see more and more technological equipment available for classroom use. As in the past each new development will probably be introduced with much fanfare, will be ignored for a time after its impossible promises prove false, and finally adopted gradually into widespread use. The lag between promotion and practical usefulness is constantly shrinking. Artists and educators are catching up with the engineers and inventors. With the advent of low cost cameras and improved film technology, for instance, a wealth of excellent short films were created in less than a decade, and film making became an increasingly popular activity among young people. Much the same rapid development and the consequent cultural impact can be expected shortly from computer assisted instruction (CAI) and the improvement of equipment for videotape recording (VTR). Despite a rather natural print bias and a distrust of machines, most English teachers will be under increasing pressure to know about such innovations and to use them in their classrooms.

An increasing number of major educational suppliers and publishers are marketing cassettes, multi-media kits, filmstrips, film loops, records, tapes, simulation games, and slide-tape units, in addition to books. Projectors are available which can show films in lighted rooms, and new desk-top learning centers permit individual students to record and listen to tapes and to project films and slides without disturbing others. Developments in VTR have created relatively inexpensive portable television studios which even young children can learn to operate, and the advent of cable television (CATV) with its public and educational channels can provide public outlets for student-produced programs.<sup>22</sup>

As one student of educational technology says, overexposure of a particular innovation prior to its practical incorporation in a working system may very well militate against its eventual acceptance, since its performance is bound to fall short of the adman's hypebole.<sup>23</sup> But the innovations keep coming with increasing rapidity, and they do have an impact on the society and the schools.

22 For particular problems and issues related to cable television and VTR, see Welby Smith, "You Me and Cable TV," *Media & Methods* 9 (Feb. 1973): 16-20.

23 Ibid. p. 16.

Although the book will probably continue to hold its dominant place in schools for the foreseeable future, non-print media and educational technology will continue to grow in importance. In a technological visual, oral, non-print environment, the teacher who is concerned solely with print, who is unfamiliar with the nature and impact of the new media, who wants merely to pass on his own love of books, will find himself increasingly out of touch with his students and their world, and increasingly ineffective in achieving his aims. He may challenge the new media, he may attempt to mitigate their effects, but he cannot afford to ignore them.

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Kuhns, William *Themes Short Films for Discussion* Dayton, Ohio Pflaum, 1968 This book provides suggested material for a thematic approach to film study and could also be useful to teachers constructing multi media thematic units

Kuhns, William, and Stanley, Robert *Exploring the Film* Dayton, Ohio Pflaum, 1968 This widely used text suggests specific approaches for the study of many films currently available for classroom use Chapter 15, "To Make a Film," offers useful technical assistance to student film-makers

La Pota, Margherite and Bruce "The Soap Opera Literature to Be Seen and Not Read" *English Journal* 62 (Apr 1973) 556-63 The article proposes an interesting student inquiry into the soaps using classroom viewing and criticism to answer the questions, "Are soap operas literature, and do they reveal 'truths' to the viewer?" Students are asked to consider the implied value system operating in the soaps, the soaps as tools for social and political change, and the soaps as art forms An opinion poll designed to record student findings and a selected bibliography are also included

Loyola University Press *Slideos* These are five sets of slides with teaching guides Slides are grouped thematically into areas such as "Faces and Feelings," "Metropolis," and "Search" and are generally well chosen and provocative, intended to stimulate student discussion, create written responses, and generate media-production projects (A similar, perhaps better, resource is David Sohn's *Come to Your Senses*, noted below)

McCoy, Dorothy "Electrified Term Papers" *English Journal* 60 (Jan 1971) 107-10 This article describes a multi-media assignment asking students to create a film or slide presentation based on their study of the Romantic poets Outlines of a number of slide-music-poetry presentations are included

Morgan, Robert E "More Avant-Rock in the Classroom" *English Journal* 50 (Nov 1969) 1238-40 Morgan provides a chronological list of poetry which has been set to music and which is available on records His list includes works from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present

Morse, David E "Avant-Rock in the Classroom" *English Journal* 58 (Feb 1969) 196-200 This article describes an interesting unit on the theme "dropping out," using a variety of records from the late 60s interspersed with more traditional literature Although the unit itself is already dated, the general pattern is useful

Murphy, Geraldine "Teaching Fiction through Visual and Verbal Art" *English Journal* 59 (Apr 1970) 502-08 The article gives an outline of materials and specific classroom techniques for helping students compare the treatment of similar themes in various media It lists films, stories, photographs, plays, and paintings which deal with pariahs, lovers, and heroes

National Council of Teachers of English distributes a number of useful publications on the teaching of media Of particular interest are the following

Dobberstein Kathleen, and Drzick, Kathleen *Producing a Multimedia Presentation* Urbana, Ill 1971 This is a twenty-four-page article giving a step-by-step account of the development of a program

Donelson, Kenneth, ed *Media and the Teaching of English and Films and the English Class* two issues of the *Arizona English Bulletin*

from 1970 and 1971 contain many practical how to articles by classroom teachers and others

Potter G Howard ed *The Complete Guide to Film Study* Urbana Ill 1972 This book includes a number of theoretical informative articles and several with specific classroom suggestions

Sohn David A *Film Study and the English Teacher* Champaign Ill 1968 This short essay contains several practical suggestions for the classroom teacher

Whetton W Victor Chairman *The Uses of Film in the Teaching of English* Urbana Ill 1971 This book includes possible lesson plans and questioning patterns

Newman Joan A *Multi Media in High School Journalism—It Really Works* *English Journal* 61 (Mar 1972) 381-84 This article describes a school program in which students produce news films and radio news programs to supplement the traditional school newspaper

O'Keefe Patrick A *The Movie is the Message!* *English Journal* 60 (Oct 1971) 957-59 This is an informative stimulating account of a teacher's first venture into film making with a sophomore class The procedures used and the description of the class's silent film of Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* provide considerable instruction for teachers

Olson Barbara *Poetry that Really Works* *Media & Methods* 8 (Mar 1972) 50-57 One of M & M's practical nuts and bolts ideas from classroom teachers this article explains a way of getting students to write cinquains haiku and tankas using short films such as *Ski the Outer Limits* *Omego* and *Dream of the Wild Horses* to supply visual imagery

Skinner Patrick F *The Family of Man in an English Class* *English Journal* 60 (Feb 1971) 270-22 This article describes how Steichen's collection of photographs inspired writing and discussion in one class and includes eleven specific suggestions for using *The Family of Man* in various ways to exercise students' powers of observation to help them summarize by writing captions and to teach them to make contrasts and comparisons

Smith Rodney *Learning with Television Commercials* *Teachers Guides to Television* 3 (Fall 1970) 11-12 (Reprinted in T W Hipple's *Readings for Teaching English in Secondary Schools* New York Macmillan 1973 pp 265-70) Smith suggests a variety of practical ways to use television commercials to teach sensory imagery form and structure and critical observation

Sohn David *Come to Your Senses* New York Scholastic Magazines This stimulating multi media learning package consists of a teaching guide thirty two well chosen photographs seven posters and four filmstrips

Using your Senses *Relationships* *The Drama of People* and *Telling the Story* The materials are exceptionally good and can be flexibly used in the classroom



# TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

For most English teachers, educational evaluation is a hostile bog of tests, measurements, and teacher rating scales populated by overly precise statisticians and overly officious school administrators. Given their understandable concern for survival, it is hard to say which problem is more distressing for beginning English teachers: knowing how they are doing, or knowing how their students are doing. The problems are of course related.

## TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY—FOR WHAT? TO WHOM?

School teachers have always been held accountable for their own and their students' behavior. Within broad limits, they have also been held accountable for what their students learned or failed to learn, although through the years there have probably been as many teachers dismissed for what they taught as for what they failed to teach. In the main, public school teachers who knew their subject, kept an orderly classroom, filled out the required forms correctly and on time, and avoided controversy in the classroom and notoriety in their personal lives were considered to be doing their jobs and were rehired. It was more or less assumed that under the guidance of these well-prepared, efficient, punctual teachers, students who were capable of learning would learn.

**THE TEACHER AS PRODUCER** Today for a number of reasons teacher accountability has taken on a more specific and perhaps more

omious meaning Although the costs of schooling have risen astronomically, there has been a rising public awareness that the schools are failing to educate a great many students satisfactorily and are not eliminating the great social problems they were expected to solve In a society such as ours, it is not surprising that increasing concern about the efficacy of today's schools should be expressed in the business like terms of institutional cost accounting schools and teachers must justify their cost in terms of measurable output Legislators, taxpayers parents and many educational critics are insisting that teachers be held accountable not only for behaving like teachers, but for producing verifiable results They want to know what, exactly, the taxpayer is to get for his school dollar, and how he will know if he is getting it

The doubts about teacher effectiveness now receiving such wide public attention are certainly not new to teachers themselves Both privately and in professional journals, English teachers have long wondered aloud about the real purposes and outcome of their efforts and as the pace of change has increased in recent years, so has professional inquiry and uncertainty about ends and means In very direct and personal ways most teachers are keenly and constantly aware of their own limitations and shortcomings and the frustrations of striving for goals which are being questioned, attacked, and changed Many a 'successful' and popular teacher harbors strong doubts about what, if any, difference he really makes to his students As the educational philosopher Harry Broudy says,

Rarely is the pupil's learning used to measure the goodness of the teaching—even teachers rarely use this as a measure More often the excitement eagerness and interest of the pupils are taken by the teacher as evidence that his teaching is good This is not a wholly irrelevant way of judging the matter, because given excitement eagerness and interest, the chances that learning is going on are better than where there is apathy But just what is being learned in the excitement excitement alone does not tell us <sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the reason so many teachers stress the acquisition of factual knowledge and specific narrow skills is that these are easily measured, and they provide the teacher with needed assurance that something has, in fact, been accomplished At the beginning of the year, none of the students knew a direct from an indirect object, and now most of them do In September, none of them had read *Macbeth* and by December they could identify most of the characters and key

<sup>1</sup> Harry S Broudy *The Real World of the Public Schools* (New York Harcourt 1972) p 40

speeches and could write passable papers on the theme of ambition in the play. The comma errors which flourished at mid year have been vastly reduced by June. Although he has the sure knowledge that most such information will be forgotten by the following September and the improvement lost and the suspicion that such narrow instruction contributes to students' hearty dislike of the subject, the teacher has reasonable proof in the form of test scores and similar objective data that he did make some measurable difference, however brief, in the lives and behavior of his students. The desire for such proof can not easily be dismissed, especially in a measurement oriented society where faith in the benefits of humanistic studies is under severe attack.

Increasingly in recent years, however, such narrow standards of success have been questioned and abandoned. Although English teachers are as eager as anyone else to have positive proof of the real fruits of their labors, they realize that such proof is elusive at best, is not likely to turn up in a mass of statistical data, and may not be measurable at all with the instruments presently available. While admitting that the current demands for evidence of success are justifiable and may have salutary effects, and that a great many teachers need to become more aware of the actual results of their teaching, English teachers are generally extremely skeptical of the producer and product metaphor of teaching and the narrowly behavioristic notion of accountability.

Resolutions passed by the National Council of Teachers of English have included statements such as the following:

English teachers recognize their accountability to various groups.

However, they reject the view that their goals and objectives can be stated only in quantifiably measurable terms describing the behaviors their students will display at the completion of instruction. (From the Resolution on Accountability at the Sixty First Annual Meeting 1971)

Teachers cannot be held fully accountable for lack of learning in situations where classrooms are overcrowded, materials and supplies inadequate, curriculum imposed, and schools poorly supported and administered. Teachers are accountable to their profession, their communities, and the parents of their pupils, but most of all they are accountable to the young people they teach. (From the Resolution on Involving Teachers and Students in Decisions Regarding Educational Accountability at the Sixtieth Annual Meeting 1970)

Resolved That concerned teachers ask: Who has the professional and moral right to predetermine and control what shall or shall not be the limits of acceptable behavior of young people? In short, do we help students grow or shape them to a mold? (From the Resolu-

tion on the Development and Use of Behavioral Objectives, at the Sixtieth Annual Meeting, 1970)<sup>2</sup>

In English, perhaps more than in other subjects, the teacher is all too aware of the immense difficulties of specifying complex humanistic learning outcomes in behavioral terms, and of measuring the effects of experiences such as reading literature, expressing and communicating vital personal experiences, or participating in creative dramatics. Most English teachers would probably agree with behaviorist Robert Zoellner that many humanistic statements of goals can be specified more sharply than they have been, and that many facets of larger goals can and probably should be stated in terms of student behavior to be reinforced. But they would also argue, as does Zoellner, that many of the most crucial goals and objectives simply cannot be reduced to precise, objectively measurable behavior without trivializing them:

Much of the most meaningful part of the life of any civilized person consists of incredibly subtle and finely nuanced perceptions which, from a behavioral point of view, can be explained by the simultaneous impact of tens, or hundreds, or perhaps thousands of "bits" of information from the external world. The result is not discrete or tabulative fact, but rather a sense of the facts. And for this sense we have devised hundreds of thousands of terms which are totally precise in meaning but logically irreducible.<sup>3</sup>

Even though, theoretically, it may be possible to render complex human behavior such as "appreciating literature" into empirically precise forms, such forms "will never be pedagogically useful, any more than a life-size map of New York City would be of any use to people living in New York City."<sup>4</sup>

2 These and several related NCTE resolutions are reprinted in the Appendix of *Measure for Measure. Classroom Practices in Teaching English 1972-1973*, Allen Berger and Blanche Hope Smith, eds (Urbana, Ill: NCTE, 1972), pp 110-14. Note also the largely critical and often hostile stance expressed in NCTE publications such as John Maxwell and Anthony Tovatt, eds., *On Writing Behavioral Objectives for English* (1970), Henry B. Maloney, ed., *Accountability and the Teaching of English* (1972), and James Hoetker, *Systems Approaches and the Teacher* (1972). Even a publication such as J. N. Hook, et al., *Representative Performance Objectives for High School English* (NY: Ronald, 1971), which is an extensive catalog of behaviorally stated objectives, begins with a long chapter warning teachers about the limitations and potential dangers of such objectives.

3. Robert Zoellner, "S-R versus S-R-R: The Problem of Behavioral Objectives," in Henry B. Maloney, ed., *Accountability and the Teaching of English* (Urbana Ill.: NCTE, 1972), pp 138-39.

4. *Ibid.*, p 141n.

Despite all apparent difficulties in evaluation, most English teachers continue to value the broad humanistic goals thought to be served by English. Likewise, teachers remain cautiously confident that they provide a valuable service to most of their students, though perhaps more as catalysts and guides than as producers of particular behavior. While they are aware of their failures and of the pressing need to clarify and evaluate their objectives and methods, they will probably continue to resist the notions that precise measurable outcomes are the only ones worth teaching for, and that the outcomes of teaching can adequately be thought of as "products."

**HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M A GOOD TEACHER?** For the beginning teacher, the issue of accountability is perhaps most clearly focused in the questions, "Am I a good teacher?" and "Can I survive in teaching?" Unfortunately, the answers to the two questions are not always the same. With limited experience, no established position to fall back on, and his livelihood at stake, the new teacher often equates good teaching with his own survival in the system. However, the more sensitive he is, the more he will be aware that in most cases just doing the job expected of him is not enough.

The demands made upon a teacher are varied and often contradictory. An administrator or department chairman may give high priority to an orderly, disciplined, businesslike classroom, or to the organized coverage of a large amount of specified content, or to test results, reading scores, and grammatical correctness in students' written work. Colleagues often give differing and conflicting words of advice: "Be tough," "Get the kids interested," "Stress grammar," "Get to know your class personally," "Keep your distance." Professional publications may urge teachers to focus on broad humanistic goals, whereas the local paper and influential parents are calling for more rigorous study and work on particular "practical" skills to prepare students for college or jobs. In any given case the teacher's sense of what is needed and possible with his students may differ from any of these external prescriptions.

A teacher's self-evaluation may be further complicated by his attraction to different, conflicting teaching models. Broudy identifies three such models: the didactic, the heuristic, and the philetic. As stated previously, the didactic teacher is one who promotes the learning of explicit content or skills. The heuristic teacher emphasizes student discovery, helping students to learn for themselves and to learn how to learn. The philetic teacher stresses the emotional affective growth of his students. Although most teachers use each of these techniques to some extent, they generally follow one more than the others. The beginning teacher who has yet to find his own particular style

may feel drawn to all three, which can lead not only to confusion but to self-doubts and a sense of failure as well. Rarely can one person operate successfully in all three modes, yet this is what teachers often feel compelled to do. As Broudy says,

the futile attempt to combine skill in didactics, heuristics, and philetics in the same person has been not the least of the causes of the failure of teacher training programs. Didactics asks the teacher to function as an efficient machine; philetics asks him to be a warm, sensitive, concerned person; heuristics demands intellectual security and flexibility.<sup>5</sup>

The new teacher may feel justifiably proud that he gets along well with his students and that they seem to enjoy and be involved with his class, yet he may be uncomfortably aware at the same time that his students couldn't begin to pass the rigorous examinations given by his colleague across the hall.

There are no easy answers to these dilemmas, but the teacher who wants to assess and improve his own performance, to be "accountable" at least to his students and himself, must seek answers to them and to such difficult questions as whether his students are learning what they are learning and the extent to which his teaching of English really contributes to their growth and well-being. Realizing the limitations imposed by less than ideal circumstances, and by his personal shortcomings, the teacher must nevertheless try to clarify his own purposes, determine what is possible and necessary in the situation, assess the value of conflicting demands made upon him, and determine the actual outcome of his work. The following suggestions may prove useful in such an undertaking.

The teacher should know how he is being evaluated. The community and school do have a legitimate right to hold the teacher accountable, and he should find out as much as possible about the evaluation procedures and criteria used. In particular, he should know who does the evaluating, what their priorities are, and what, if any, check-lists or rating instruments are used. The degree to which teacher evaluation rests on data such as student questionnaires, test results, or interaction analyses varies considerably, and it is seldom possible to determine the exact criteria which will be applied. In most cases, formal evaluation is still largely a matter of classroom observation by a supervisor or administrator who reports on his sense of the situation, his educated guess about whether or not students are learning, and whether the teacher is doing a competent job of managing the classroom situation. Generally, if the teacher seems well prepared, the

<sup>5</sup> *The Real World of the Public Schools*, p. 61.

students appear reasonably content and profitably occupied and the class is orderly supervisors will assume that all is well. As in most job situations there is also a good deal of informal evaluation based on hearsay from students, parents and colleagues and on the teacher's professional activities and his performance of nonteaching duties.

Accurate information about such procedures is important not only to survive in the job but also to avoid assuming restrictions exist where none in fact do. Too many teachers blame administrators for their own lack of initiative or creativity. There are of course instances where a supervisor's sense of good teaching is entirely antithetical to the teacher's. But although stories abound of good teachers who were unjustly fired for putting their students' welfare above the demands of an oppressive insensitive administration, in most cases good teaching is applauded or at least tolerated. The beginning teacher who is conscientiously trying to improve and who seeks help from colleagues and supervisors will generally fare reasonably well. Although he should recognize and allow for the strong subjective element in evaluations, he can usually benefit considerably from the comments and suggestions of an experienced observer who views his classes from a relatively detached perspective.

The teacher should analyze his own teaching behavior. What exactly does he do and want to do when he teaches and why? What immediate impact does his behavior have on students? In answering such questions, a teacher must depend largely on his subjective sense of the facts, his intuitive feeling about his classes and students resulting from day to day observations and judgments. However, it is also useful to supplement and test these general judgments by such means as the following:

1. Plan time at the end of each day to consider general impressions, the handling of particular incidents, and the attempts to help particular students. What seemed to work and what didn't? Which questions, examples and materials should be improved, saved or discarded? What might have been a better alternative? Some teachers find it useful to keep a professional journal of such reflections to which they can return and reconsider in light of subsequent experience. Essential to such a journal is the statement review and testing of beliefs and generalizations about teaching and learning. These personal written assessments force the teacher to clarify and think through what might otherwise remain hazy or ill considered.
2. Make a personal check list for self evaluation citing evidence which would indicate good teaching. One result teachers find from working out such a list is their increased understanding of their own ideas and ideals. The list will probably include both

positive and negative items of teacher and student behavior and will change as the teacher's perspective changes. A weekly review of one's teaching using the list and any supporting data can provide a useful record of professional growth as well as a spur to improvement. Sample items which might appear on such a check list include

I will not usually resort to threats to motivate work

I will not embarrass students in front of the class

I will come to class prepared with plans I think are really worthwhile

I will provide a range of alternative materials and activities to accommodate individual differences

I will not require students to do work I personally believe to be worthless

The majority of students will appear interested most of the time

All or most students will participate willingly in the suggested activities

Students will accept increasing responsibility for their own learning

The teacher can keep the list manageable by limiting it arbitrarily to the twenty or twenty five items he considers most important and periodically revising the list to reflect new demands, problems or perceptions

3. Tape record class sessions devoted to discussion and analyze the playback perhaps using an instrument such as the Flanders Interaction Analysis scales (see Chapter 3 pages 44-45). Who did most of the talking? Did the teacher answer most of his own questions? Which questions elicited the most enthusiastic student responses? Did the students ask questions? Did any of their comments indicate enthusiasm or interest? How clear and interesting were the teacher's explanations and comments? Did the class achieve and maintain some momentum or were there frequent dead spots and periods of confusion?
4. Solicit observations by colleagues or by another teacher's students. If the observer is experienced at teacher observation it may be enough to ask simply "What did you think?" or "How could I have improved the situation?" In some cases the teacher may want more specific kinds of feedback. Suggestions for the use of observers are cited in the section "Evaluating the speech environment of the classroom" Chapter 4 pages 101-103. In addition to classroom observation, colleagues or students may be able to offer useful comments on lesson plans, procedures, proposed materials and examinations. Especially when the teacher



is contemplating a unique approach it is useful to discuss it with a sympathetic listener who can suggest possible improvements or problems without dampening the innovator's enthusiasm

- 5 Plan to evaluate particular units or new teaching approaches Which materials assignments or activities led to greatest involvement interest and learning? Were students test scores higher with one approach than with another? Did the writing of poetry seem to increase student interest in the reading and analysis of poems? Did the use of photographs as stimuli lead to better writing and fewer errors? Did seeing the movie first make students any less apathetic when reading the novel? Did the presence of a student discussion leader improve the quality of class participation? Did the dittoed study questions increase the number of voluntary participants in the discussion?
- 6 Obtain and evaluate student responses to the teaching Attitude inventories questionnaires rating sheets and similar instruments can all provide useful information if students feel free to respond honestly and if the teacher is sufficiently objective in evaluating the results to consider corrective action Some instruments the teacher might consider are the following
  - a Specific item attitude questionnaires These could be constructed to gather student opinions on a variety of topics and practices

Interest and involvement

This teacher makes the subject interesting

I look forward to coming to this class

I am usually bored in this class

I participate more in this class than I do in most classes

Usefulness and relevance

I think I am learning a lot in this class

I don't see any personal use for most of the things we do in here

This class is a waste of time

The things I am learning in this class are worthwhile

Difficulty

I don't understand what is going on most of the time

I would learn more if we went more slowly

Most of the material is too simple to be interesting

The tests and quizzes are too tricky

Teacher characteristics

This teacher really listens to what students say

The teacher's lectures are usually boring

I find it difficult to talk to this teacher  
 The teacher's questions are interesting and make me think  
 The teacher is enthusiastic and seems to enjoy teaching  
 The teacher's explanations are clear and interesting

Particular units or methods

The unit on science fiction was interesting

I believe I learned more in the free-reading units than I did in the regular literature units

I am usually interested and involved when a student leads the discussion

I would learn more if the teacher used more tests to check on whether I'd done the reading

Results of such questionnaires are, of course, very subjective, and by themselves they do not tell the whole story. It is often difficult to determine how students interpreted particular items and to assess their motives in responding. For instance, students may flatter a "nice" teacher who isn't teaching them much, or they may try to "get even" with a demanding or unpopular teacher. However, if the teacher is careful in constructing the items he can obtain useful information which is difficult to obtain in other ways. As will be discussed later in this chapter, similar devices can be used to check students' responses and attitudes toward subject matter.

A variation of the attitude questionnaire is the check-list or rating scale. Here, students are asked to check off listed items which they think apply to the teacher, method or material. For example

This teacher sticks too close to the textbook\_\_\_, doesn't ask interesting questions\_\_\_, doesn't listen to students\_\_\_ gives clear answers to students' questions\_\_\_, etc.<sup>6</sup>

- b Inventories of reactions to particular classes or methods may be constructed in several ways. A short answer form, asking students to estimate such things as how much of the time they were personally involved in the class, how many times they spoke or asked questions, how often the teacher spoke to them or what other students thought of the class, may give the teacher some notion of how students perceive his teaching. A different form of the inventory can be made by providing a grid on which students can check their responses. For instance, one

<sup>6</sup> For additional information on these and similar instruments see R. H. Simpson and J. M. Seidman, *Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning* (Washington, D.C.: The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1962).

such grid asks students to assume that their teacher will change in some way and to indicate the direction they would like that change to take. On the side of the grid are such items as 'Help us with work,' "Smile and laugh," "Make us work hard," and "Explain why we are doing the work." Five response categories, listed across the top of the grid, range from 'Much more than he does now,' through 'The same as he does now,' to "Much less than he does now." The advantage of the grid form and others like it is that results can be tabulated quickly and easily and arranged in a clear format for evaluation.

- c Open-ended questionnaires allow students to respond in their own words. The questions may be very general, such as 'How could this class be improved?' or fairly specific, such as 'What kinds of books (activities, topics, etc.) would be most interesting to you personally?' Because such questions do not confine students to predetermined responses, the results are hard to tabulate and are often disappointingly general. Whereas some responses do provide valuable insights and observations most are likely to be of the "yearbook" variety: 'Keep up the good work,' "Relax," or 'Smile more.' A variation of the open-ended questionnaire which resolves some of these problems utilizes the sentence completion format and uses such items as

I learn best when \_\_\_\_\_

The things I dislike most about this class are \_\_\_\_\_

I wish my teacher would stop \_\_\_\_\_

- d Interviews with selected past or present students may be helpful to the teacher if he listens well and can make students feel at ease and free to speak candidly. Some teachers arrange for systematic feedback of this type by having classes elect evaluation committees to meet with the teacher periodically and discuss observations, problems, gripes and suggestions for improvement. The usefulness of such procedures is increased if the students involved represent students of varied abilities and attitudes.

All such efforts to obtain and evaluate student reactions have limitations and possible dangers, and they are inevitably influenced and complicated by the teacher's personal stake in the outcome.

7 These and similar devices are described in Robert Fox, Margaret Barron, Buzski and Richard Schmuck, *Diagnosing Classroom Learning Environments* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1968). Other useful inventory forms are suggested in Alfred H. Gorman, *Teachers and Learners: The Interactive Process of Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969).

How much battering can the teacher's ego take? How many "frank" personal comments can he read without qualling? Do ten moderately flattering remarks compensate for one sharp barb?"

7. A teacher should consider at least once each year his attempts to evaluate his work and to improve. What information and evidence has been sought? What new ideas have been tried? What professional reading has been done? In short, how seriously is the teacher trying to improve his teaching?

A teacher should attempt to determine the outcome of his teaching and the effects he and his classes have on students' attitudes, values, knowledge, skills, and behavior. This is, of course, the basic test of good teaching, but such evaluations are difficult to make. Teachers can seldom know the extent to which they influence students in the long-run, and short-term gains or changes which can be measured easily frequently seem trivial or ephemeral. It is relatively easy, for instance, to determine whether or not a student has read a particular novel or story, but it is much more difficult to assess his understanding of the work, or the nature of its impact upon him. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine the part the teacher played in the learning which actually did occur. Just how much credit is due to the teacher when, as often happens, the bright students do well and enjoy his classes and the poor ones seem to get little except another recorded failure? If, at the end of instruction, students are still in their assigned places on a normal bell curve, just as if they had not been instructed at all, what has the teacher really accomplished? As the Coleman Report indicates, achievement in school seems much more closely related to a student's socioeconomic background and that of his peers than to the teachers, school, or curriculum.<sup>8</sup>

Determining outcomes is not necessarily the same thing as finding out whether students are learning what the teacher wants them to learn. Students who are not achieving the teacher's objectives may nevertheless be deriving benefit from the class, and students who are achieving the stated objectives may be suffering from undesirable side effects, perhaps becoming, in Robert Hogan's words, one of the great number of "presumably literate adults who found that as their

8 Winifred L. Frazer, "The Teacher's Ego or What Should Be Done about Student Evaluation?" in *Measure for Measure Classroom Practices in Teaching English 1972-1973*, p. 99

9 James S. Coleman et al. *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D.C. US Office of Education, 1966). For additional comment on this important report, see Godfrey Hodgson, "Do Schools Make a Difference?" *Atlantic Monthly* 231 (Mar. 1973), and George H. Henry, "English Education and the American Dream," *English Journal* 62 (Jan. 1973).

skills in reading were being strengthened their interest in reading was being dulled.<sup>10</sup> Certainly the teacher wants to find out whether his objectives are being achieved but single-mindedness in this respect can be blinding. More occurs in a human learning situation than can ever be recorded, measured or evaluated and the teacher who looks only for a particular predetermined outcome is very likely to overlook the most important and potentially useful information available to him. Student participation in evaluation procedures may help to avoid such narrowness and to provide a needed corrective for the teacher whose objectives are unrealistic or restrictive.

Even though outcomes are difficult to measure and evaluate the teacher who hopes to improve and to have some assurance that he is in fact having some useful effect has no alternative. Although teachers are justifiably skeptical about narrow behavioral objectives and the demand for prespecified outcomes it is simply not enough for them to raise objections. Questions about the effects of schooling are real and legitimate and the means of obtaining valid answers to them must be found. As George H. Henry has observed: "Of all the disciplines English makes the most extravagant claims for itself as a school study—claims which are increasingly challenged by empirical evidence."

English education has hidden behind grossly vaporous idealism. The present behavioral objectives surge as much as I condemn it at least arose to challenge this literary jargon."<sup>11</sup>

## EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Just as teacher evaluation should lead to improved teaching so should student evaluation result in improved learning. In most cases effective evaluation does not mean giving grades although grades are the customary by-product of such evaluation in schools. Nor does it necessarily mean being objective although objectivity is generally considered a primary quality of good evaluations. There are times of course when it is desirable for a student to know how his performance measures up to a particular external standard. But there are also many times in a classroom when the most useful evaluation is a word of praise or encouragement or no external evaluation at all. It is after all possible to promote students' self-satisfaction without the magical A. Recorded grades are not the only way to provide feedback to students on their tests, writing or activities.

10 Robert F. Hogan, "You'll Like It—It's Canneloni!" *Phi Delta Kappan* (Apr 1971).

11 George H. Henry, "English Education and the American Dream," *English Journal* 62 (Jan 1973): 25 and 27.

**THE USES AND EFFECTS OF MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION** Although virtually everyone expects teachers to give tests assignments, and grades there is considerable controversy over the way they should be evaluated Teachers and theorists disagree basically about what should be measured, how, and to what ends and an increasing number of teachers seem to believe, with Barrett John Mandel, that 'judgment in the form of grades and measurement (against "standards") does more to prevent education than to encourage it'<sup>12</sup> The National Council of Teachers of English, noting the inconsistency between the goals of English teaching and present grading practices has issued a Statement of Policy on Grading which advocates among other things, that only passing grades be recorded on a student's permanent record, that students failing a course would simply receive no credit for it<sup>13</sup>

**Evaluation and school procedures** Despite increasing dissatisfaction, however, alternatives to the present grading system have not been widely adopted, perhaps because tests and measurement, evaluation and grades are so inextricably involved in school procedures A key issue in the grading controversy, in fact, is whether tests and grades have become altogether too important to teachers and students alike subordinating teaching to testing learning to grades, and intrinsic motivation to external rewards or threats of failure Whereas the schools' avowed purpose is to educate and train they often seem to function more as a sorting ground, using narrow and perhaps irrelevant criteria to label and catalogue students for opportunities, jobs and positions in society Ostensibly used to "objectively" measure and record students' progress and achievement, tests and grades have in fact become the key instruments used to motivate, reward and punish Unfortunately, grade centered evaluation is demonstrably ineffective for such purposes, but so long as teachers depend upon grades as their primary source of motivation and control, the schools are unlikely to change the system significantly, however imperfectly it operates

**Evaluation and learning** The primary function of the teacher is to help students learn and evaluation can unquestionably be useful in this regard if it does not become the tail that wags the dog Whether the teacher wants to know his students personally get them involved in individualized projects, or just get them through a prescribed curriculum successfully it is essential that he gather and assess information Interests abilities attitudes needs and learning

12 Barrett John Mandel Teaching Without Judging College English 34 (Feb 1973) 623

13 The entire policy statement with pertinent background information is appended to Berger and Smith eds Measure for Measure pp 106-09

problems will all influence students' behavior and school work and the good teacher must know and make allowances for these elements in his teaching. During a course or unit the teacher needs to know how well he and his students are doing so he can adjust the classroom situation and methods accordingly. At the conclusion of a unit he will want to determine its effectiveness. Similarly, students will benefit from evaluations which reward, encourage, and show them how they can improve. Evaluation procedures which involve students in peer- and self-evaluation can encourage the kind of personal responsibility and self-knowledge which are among the highest aims of education. Through measurement and evaluation, then, the teacher can diagnose problems, obtain useful information about his students and his teaching, provide helpful feedback to students, and encourage students' independence and self-knowledge. And in so doing, he obtains the information necessary to make meaningful reports and recommendations to students, parents, to colleges, or to prospective employers.

In many classrooms, however, measurement and evaluation contribute little either to teaching or learning. Teachers often seem to give tests simply because it is expected of them to provide the basis for a report card grade, to pressure students to do the assignments, or to punish those who do not. Some teachers evaluate only at the end of units when there is little the student can do to improve. Others use tests and quizzes too extensively, as teaching devices, recording grades for each so that students who catch on quickly get high grades and those who are slower do not. In schools where low-ability students are not permitted to receive more than a certain grade, teachers may use tests to keep grades down to the approved level. When tests, assignments, and evaluations are used mainly in these ways—as they too frequently are—their effects are more often negative than positive. Schools may never attain the ideal cited in the NCTE Policy Statement: a system resting not on external grades but on student satisfaction based upon self-evaluation,<sup>14</sup> but teachers can help to reduce the ill effects of the present system if they are aware of its limitations and potential dangers.

**Evaluation and the real world** As measurement specialists point out, there is nothing inherently bad in evaluation. People are tested and evaluated throughout their lives. In real life, however, tests are usually undertaken voluntarily, and the results are more meaningful. The classified ad sells the car, or it doesn't; the application essay gets him the job, or it doesn't; he can find and read the book on tree pruning, or he can't; his conversation interests people, or it bores

them Whereas in real life a person ordinarily avoids situations in which he does not perform well, in school he usually has no such choice Especially in required subjects like English, the student must submit to continual tests and evaluations whether or not he has any interest in or aptitude for the subject as it is taught

The effects of these forced evaluations, particularly on those who do not measure up, are frequently more harmful than helpful Although rigorous grading and the demand for high-quality work no doubt spur some students on to personal fulfillment and high achievement, the success of some is often bought with the failure and alienation of many others Adolescents are already painfully aware that they differ from one another in many ways, and that just as some are more competent socially, athletically, or mechanically, some of them speak, write, and read more easily and effectively than others The question then becomes Should the English teacher's main responsibility be to make public issue and record of these differences, or to promote each student's growth in and through language to the greatest extent possible? It is not altogether clear whether these two roles are compatible Certainly there can be little educational value in repeatedly branding a student as below average, however true the assessment may be, or in assuring him that he is failing to do something he has never really tried to do in the first place As psychologist Erik Erikson says,

The development of a sense of inferiority, the feeling that one will never be 'any good' is a danger which can be minimized by a teacher who knows how to emphasize what a child can do<sup>15</sup>

Like teaching itself, evaluation should serve useful educational purposes and it should achieve those purposes without negative side effects Although continual evaluation is essential to responsible teaching grades are not For this reason, teachers in traditional systems might well follow the advice of John Holt 'if you must grade grade as seldom as possible as privately as possible and as easily as possible'<sup>16</sup>

**DATA THE BASIS OF EVALUATION** Evaluation is based on the data produced by tests assignments and informal observation But what measuring instruments should be used? Many achievements which English teachers value are simply not measurable using conventional paper and pencil tests or writing assignments In 1973 the

<sup>15</sup> Erik Erikson *Identity Youth and Crisis* (New York Norton 1968) p 125

<sup>16</sup> John Holt *What Do I Do Monday? A Delta Book* (New York Dell 1970) pp 250-51



NGTE Committee on Research initiated the Research Instruments Project to deal with this problem by finding or developing innovative ways to measure such things as growth in literary appreciation reading writing listening and speaking and new means of assessing attitude change climate for learning and creativity. A second problem paradoxically is that there are more data available than can be reduced to letters or numbers and recorded neatly in a grade book. Most teachers face the dilemma every marking period of trying to grade fairly a student whose classroom participation indicates very high ability and achievement but whose test scores and composition grades are at best mediocre.

The teacher's freedom in evaluating student performance varies considerably from school to school. Because he is an English teacher students colleagues and others have certain expectations about what he will do and there may be institutional controls to see that he meets these expectations. In some cases departmental or district wide exams are given and teachers are required to include in their teaching the topics that the exams measure. In schools with extensive testing programs a teacher may be held accountable for his students' performance on standardized achievement tests which stress particular knowledge and skills. In elective programs particular objectives and appropriate evaluation procedures are often stipulated for a course at the time it is proposed and developed. In an increasing number of schools departments and individual teachers are required to state their objectives behaviorally specifying in advance the student performance to be evaluated. At present however teachers still most commonly construct their own exams and evaluate as they see fit within the framework of the content and skills stipulated by the curriculum.

Whatever constraints may exist however there are some general criteria which the teacher should consider. To the extent possible he should base his evaluations on data which have the following characteristics:

Data should reflect the achievements the teacher considers important. A teacher may consider wide independent reading of literature to be very important but find that his grade book test scores often reveal little more than whether or not particular works were read and details memorized. A student's progress in literary study is probably better reflected by his approach to an unfamiliar work. Likewise his ability to apply linguistic concepts to real life situations is not easily measured by a multiple choice test stressing the special terminology of the concept.

Data should reveal something significant about the student. The insight a student gains from reading *Hamlet* is not indicated by his ability to match particular lines with their speakers or by an essay

question demanding only a plot summary. His ability to write error-free prose is reflected dimly, if at all, by his score on an objective test of writing mechanics. His refusal to give a five minute speech on an assigned topic may indicate little about his ability or willingness to speak in public on issues which concern him.

Data should be useful to the student or the teacher. A letter grade on a composition does not tell the student what he needs to work on and it does not remind the teacher what writing problems need attention. Students often want to know how they are doing in relation to others or to some external standards, and the teacher should be prepared to give them such information, although this may not necessarily provide the best basis for recorded grades. College-bound students, for example, should be able to find out how well they read and write by college-level standards. However, this information is not useful to all students and such standards are usually not appropriate in determining grades. Test results which only reveal which students learned the most and fail to help the teacher improve his teaching are not as useful as they should be.

Data should be obtained as nonthreateningly as possible. The tough, no nonsense objective exam frequently reveals little more about the student than whether or not he can function well in anxiety-producing situations. Tests with complicated directions, hard-to-follow formats, or tricky questions may indicate more about students' test wisdom than their knowledge of the subject. When all compositions and exercises are graded and those grades count, students may become excessively concerned with pleasing the teacher and getting the good grade, or they may refuse to do as well as they can, perhaps preferring to choose failure rather than accept it from the teacher.

Data used for general grades should be as broad based as possible. At the very least each student should have had the opportunity to demonstrate what he has learned and can do even if he consistently does poorly on prespecified tasks. In grading, the teacher of expository prose may choose to ignore the fact that his poorest student writes clever, imaginative short stories on her own, but he shouldn't be unaware of it. As long as students are required to take English and have little or no choice of teachers or courses it is manifestly unfair to base their evaluation on a narrow, restrictive range of data. To create a permanent record of a student's refusal or failure to do arbitrarily assigned compositions or readings or his failure to measure up to standards which are more applicable to English majors than to the general population makes no more sense than to grade every teacher on his ability to program a computer. The objectives of evaluation at the secondary level at least in required courses are probably best served when the teacher uses all the information that he can make available.

Data should include at least some items selected by the student himself. An increasing number of teachers allow students some choice in which papers or exams will be counted toward report card grades. Some teachers also give them the option of setting their own objectives within the framework of the course and establishing the criteria to be used in grading their performance. Similarly teachers may provide a varied set of assignments and projects which students can choose from in order to obtain the grades they desire. When students have some say in how they are to be evaluated and what data are to be used, grades are probably seen as fairer, less threatening and less arbitrary.

**SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION AND MEASUREMENT** Faced with as many as 150 to 200 students each day and the responsibility of grading every one, the teacher cannot realistically expect to depend entirely on individualized observation and measurement. Although he must be aware of important and unanticipated student data, he must still do some systematic data gathering. In determining what to evaluate, the teacher reflects his view of what English is, what he thinks he is or should be teaching. The teacher who emphasizes measurement of particular communication skills obviously sees his subject differently from one who tests primarily for knowledge of literature. The teacher who views the subject primarily as a means to general linguistic or humanistic development may provide more latitude in his evaluations than the teacher who sees English as a particular body of knowledge and skills to be mastered.

Stating objectives and selecting instruments. Whatever view the teacher holds, he must first determine the kinds of information he will systematically look for and then find ways of obtaining it. To accomplish the first task, the teacher can construct a statement of objectives, do a task analysis, or make a table of specifications. To accomplish the second, he must find or construct appropriate paper and pencil tests, questionnaires, observation schedules, and assignments. If a teacher's objectives are primarily subject-centered, if he asks his students to perform tasks such as reading *Lord of the Flies*, he can fairly easily determine whether they have been achieved. Similarly, it is a simple matter for a teacher to ascertain whether students can correctly identify the main subject and verb phrase in a sentence. As the complexity of objectives increases, however, it becomes more difficult to measure student performance. Most teachers, for example, want their students to value literature as a way of finding out about the world, but conventional exams and assignments seldom deal with this affective domain.

To consider the range of objectives possible and ways to evaluate them, teachers should become familiar with the cognitive and affective

tive handbooks of the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*<sup>17</sup> Proceeding from simple and concrete to complex and abstract items the Taxonomy systematically categorizes a great number of objectives and test items from various subjects into cognitive and affective hierarchies. The cognitive handbook dealing with knowledge skills and abilities establishes six main categories of objectives with several major subcategories:

- 1 00 Knowledge (recall of specific information)
  - 1 10 Knowledge of specifics
  - 1 20 Knowledge of ways of dealing with specifics
  - 1 30 Knowledge of universals and abstractions
- 2 00 Comprehension (lowest level of understanding)
  - 2 10 Translation
  - 2 20 Interpretation
  - 2 30 Extrapolation
- 3 00 Application (applying abstractions to new situations)
- 4 00 Analysis (examining parts and relationships)
  - 4 10 Analysis of elements
  - 4 20 Analysis of relationships
  - 4 30 Analysis of organizational principles
- 5 00 Synthesis (combining elements into a new whole)
  - 5 10 Production of unique communication
  - 5 20 Production of plan or proposed set of operations
  - 5 30 Derivation of set of abstract relations
- 6 00 Evaluation (making qualitative or quantitative judgments)
  - 6 10 Judgments in terms of internal evidence
  - 6 20 Judgments in terms of external criteria

The affective handbook dealing with values and attitudes establishes five major categories:

- 1 00 Receiving (attending to particular phenomena)
  - 1 10 Awareness
  - 1 20 Willingness to receive
  - 1 30 Controlled or selected attention
- 2 00 Responding (showing evidence of involvement by acting)
  - 2 10 Acquiescence in responding
  - 2 20 Willingness to respond
  - 2 30 Satisfaction in response
- 3 00 Valuing (accepting the worth of a subject or activity)
  - 3 10 Acceptance of a value

<sup>17</sup> *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. Benjamin S. Bloom. *Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* (New York: McKay, 1956). David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia. *Handbook II: Affective Domain* (New York: McKay, 1964).

- 3 20 Preference for a value
- 3 30 Commitment
- 4 00 Organization (building a system of values and priorities)
  - 4 10 Conceptualization of a value
  - 4 20 Organization of a value system
- 5 00 Characterization by values (acting consistently in accordance with internalized values)
  - 5 10 Generalized set
  - 5 20 Characterization

Most teachers depend on tests and assignments to measure achievement in the cognitive domain and on observation to assess affective growth. One's sense of the situation in a classroom is often based on affective elements—whether or not students pay attention, respond willingly, and seem to enjoy the subject. Grades, however, are more apt to be based on low level cognitive achievements assessed by test items which measure recall and simple interpretation. As Sandra Clark points out, however, the two domains are not in fact separable in the classroom and they should not be separated in the curriculum.

Attention (at the 1 00 level of the affective domain) is exceptionally important in any sequential learning situation if students are to be successful at each step of the sequence. Success in turn is essential before the students can proceed to a cognitive sequence which builds upon the background being developed at the time.<sup>18</sup>

Because affective goals are so personal and subjective measurement in this domain is difficult. It is not always possible, for instance, to tell whether the student is valuing the subject matter or the teacher's approval and high grades. Furthermore, as Clark says, achievement in this domain is often sporadic and covert, making teacher judgments about student progress especially difficult. Nevertheless, achievement of these goals is essential to the success of the whole teaching enterprise and attention to them should not be left to chance.

We might liken the lack of achievement in the cognitive domain to the warped floor in one part of a house or to cracks in one of its walls. They can be easily and objectively perceived and once the cause has been eliminated and the damage repaired, they will probably have no further effect on the quality of the house. A lack of affective achievement, however, is more akin to a rotting foundation.

18 Sandra Clark, *Color Me Complete and Sequential The Curriculum Builders Game Adapted for the Secondary English Program*, in Charles Suhor, John Sawyer, Mayher, and Frank J. D'Angelo, eds., *The Growing Edges of Secondary English* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1968), p. 37.

or the presence of termites. These weaknesses are much more difficult to spot in their early stages. Moreover, the task of repairing the damage they have caused is much more difficult because a repair of only the visibly affected portion and the elimination of the cause of the problem in that portion will not be a permanent solution.<sup>19</sup>

Clark, Alan Purves and others have attempted to develop measurable statements of cognitive and affective objectives in English. Purves, advocating a response centered approach to literature, agrees with Clark that cognitive developments in criticism and literature 'are worthless if the student does not enjoy literature, if he does not develop his taste, and if he develops no desire to read another book'.<sup>20</sup> He argues for use of questionnaires and tests which attempt to measure as wide a range of behavior as possible, and emphasizes application and expressed responses: recreation, analysis, expressions of engagement, interpretation, evaluation, and preference.

A useful source of objectives expressed in terms of student performance is the Tri University Project's *Representative Performance Objectives for High School English*.<sup>21</sup> This text is organized into six major subject divisions: sending and receiving nonverbal messages, speaking and listening, language reading and responding to literature, writing and exploring the mass media. For each subject, a series of general objectives is presented, and each objective is subdivided into a number of representative behaviorally stated "enabling objectives." Each objective states what the student will be able to do when he achieves the objective, thereby building the evaluation into the objective and leaving to the evaluator only the job of determining the quality of the performance. Criteria for an adequate performance are relatively clear in items such as

Given a list of combined letters the student distinguishes the English combinations from the non English combinations.<sup>22</sup>

Here the student makes the correct choices or he does not. On more abstract items, however, the adequacy of a performance may not be as easily determined. A student may explain or interpret something

19 Ibid p 41

20 Alan C Purves, *Evaluation of Learning in Literature* in Benjamin S. Bloom, J. Thomas Hastings and George F. Madaus eds. *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning* (New York: McGraw Hill 1971) p 757

21 J. N. Hook et al. *Representative Performance Objectives for High School English: A Guide for Teaching, Evaluating, and Curriculum Planning* (New York: Ronald 1971)

22 Ibid p 70

poorly or well, for instance, and the teacher must decide whether or not the attempt satisfies the objective he has in mind

In the process of developing a list of objectives the teacher must identify content, skills and student behavior he is particularly interested in observing, and this heightened awareness will probably in itself improve his evaluations. For example faced with a class of confirmed English haters, he may adopt an approach like Daniel Fader's 'hooked on books' program which puts great stress on developing positive attitudes toward reading and writing.<sup>23</sup> The kind of information he will look for will not be revealed by the usual 'knowledge' or 'comprehension' test questions, but by evidence of the students' receptivity to reading and writing their willingness to respond, and their satisfaction in responding. Aware of his objectives the teacher is more likely to note the attitudes embodied in his students' classroom conversation and activity.

Rather than using conventional tests, a teacher might base his evaluation on lists of books read, participation in discussions, student journal comments about books or characters, the quality of essays relating reading to students' own experiences, attitude inventories, or questionnaires. If the teacher is concerned with changes in attitude, he will probably want to develop two inventory forms for use in pre- and post-testing to determine the direction and extent of student attitude change. To aid in observation the teacher may find it useful to construct check-lists or rating scales for individual classes or students. Check-lists measuring affective objectives might include

- Attends to reading during reading periods
- Browses "purposefully" in library or bookstore
- Writes in journal without being forced to
- Has a book available to read during free reading
- Asks book-related questions
- Comments willingly on book he is currently reading
- States and supports his judgments on a given work.

Robert Mager, one of the more influential writers on behavioral objectives, has developed a number of ideas for assessing students' attitudes toward a subject and toward learning it, including methods of observation, open-ended questionnaires and inventories.<sup>24</sup> Among Mager's suggestions is the strong recommendation that attitude

23 Daniel Fader and Elton McNeill *Hooked on Books Program and Proof* (New York: Berkley, 1968)

24 Robert F. Mager *Developing Attitude Toward Learning* (Palo Alto: Calif Fearon, 1968)

questionnaires be administered in a way that will assure students that their responses will not be used against them or for grading purposes. He further recommends that attitudes be assessed through the pattern of responses students give to various instruments in different situations rather than through a single response, but he urges teachers not to forget the most obvious method of determining attitude, to ask the direct question 'Do you like literature?' Among the types of questions which might be included in an attitude questionnaire are those asking whether or not students would voluntarily take another course in the subject or asking them to rank their various school subjects according to personal interest. Behavioral choice items may also be used. 'If you had to choose one of the following three activities to talk about which would it be? Reading a book, doing a geometry problem or fixing a car.'

Beyond observation and the instruments already suggested, there are various ways of gathering and recording information which teachers may want to consider

Response cards may be collected indicating attitudes toward books, particular subjects, or activities.

Attitude and preference questionnaires, similar to those described earlier in this chapter on pages 297-298, may be used to estimate students' attitudes toward the subject.

Problem solving situations may be created requiring students to learn and demonstrate particular skills such as using the card catalog or a particular reference book.

Pupil self evaluations can be requested on particular assignments, units or the entire course. In them students would be asked to establish criteria and evaluate themselves using those criteria.

Standardized tests may be requested from the school's guidance department to measure particular achievements and skills.

Skill demonstration situations in which students are required to accomplish a particular task such as speaking extemporaneously for five minutes or writing on a familiar topic without making any sentence errors may be more useful than paper and pencil tests if time permits.

Projects such as taking a survey, writing letters to the editor or creating stories to tell to young children provide opportunities to observe student performance of particular tasks in situations which may approach those they will meet in real life.

Objective teacher made tests using true false, multiple choice, matching or completion formats can be used to gather information.

Essay exams if carefully worded can allow the student to demonstrate what he has learned as well as testing for particular objectives.

Student made tests can be used to help students develop goals and learn self evaluation.



Given the accessibility and convenience of cassette tape recorders it is no longer necessary to rely exclusively on written responses for purposes of evaluation. Although recorded interviews and oral examinations may take too much time to be practical in evaluating an entire class they may provide a fair and feasible means of obtaining data from students whose poor writing skill obscures what they may know about an examination topic. One recent study suggests that exams utilizing oral responses to literature reveal aspects of student learning and critical skill which are not brought out in written responses and concludes that

continuing the currently exclusive use of written examinations suppresses important and useful data on student learning. When students have an opportunity to talk in an examination they touch upon some subjects that they do not discuss when writing. Examinations restricted to either mode of response may suppress useful information in the evaluation of student learning.<sup>25</sup>

Conventional objective tests because they are familiar and easy to score are the most commonly used measuring instruments in the classroom today but they seldom yield the range of information they could. Objective tests need not be limited to recall questions but can measure skill in analysis application or evaluation. For example if the purpose of a Shakespeare unit is to enable students to read Shakespearean prose the teacher may give them a passage from a play they have not read before and ask a series of questions about it. If a particular critical system has been studied such as Aristotle's Poetics a teacher might ask his students to apply their knowledge of the system to a new work introduced on the test having them choose statements which the critic would be likely to make about the work. Although it takes more time to develop a good objective test the teacher generally will have much greater faith in the test results. A great number of textbooks on tests and evaluation are available to supply the teacher with a wealth of question types and formats. The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives can also be useful in supplying models.

In the preceding discussion emphasis has been placed on behavior rather than on subject matter. In recent years English teachers have generally expanded the content of their courses permitting students to study a wider range of reading materials and non print media and offering more latitude in topic choice and form of expres-

25 Joseph J. Foley, A Comparison of Oral and Written Responses in a Literature Examination (Ph.D. diss. Boston College) quoted in Charles R. Cooper, Literature Humanities Media, *English Journal* 62 (Oct 1973) 1058.

sion in composition assignments. However, evaluation has continued to be limited. Paper-and pencil tests still emphasize recall and repetition rather than application, and very little attention has been given to students' affective development. Despite the lack of proven testing instruments, teachers can still obtain a wider variety of data than they customarily do. In planning a teaching unit or a course of study, they should attempt to consider the range of behavior they might include in their objectives, and they should be particularly careful to determine whether their tests and assignments really evaluate what they are interested in measuring.

**Task analysis.** One method teachers can use to determine what data to look for systematically is task analysis. To make such an analysis, the teacher first states his general objectives and then determines what tasks students must be able to do in order to achieve them. Although this method is more appropriate to a skill-centered than to a content centered unit, task analysis can suggest a particular sequence of things to teach and indicate points along the way at which students should be evaluated. However, as stated earlier, this does not mean that students should necessarily be given grades at each point of measurement.

This skill centered approach has been used most extensively in English in the teaching of composition. Rather than asking students to write entire compositions, a task involving many skills, a teacher may first teach the various skills necessary to the larger writing process. Evaluating at each step along the way, the teacher may teach units such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word-choice, sentence structure, topic choice, outlining and so forth. Some school systems have formalized this approach by establishing a curriculum for several grades and requiring that teachers at each grade cover a certain body of skills and a particular form, such as the five paragraph expository essay.

Critics of this approach argue that such teaching unnecessarily fragments what should be a holistic activity and that at any rate all students should not be required to go through such an arbitrary sequence at the same lock step pace. Does it really matter the critics ask, whether a person masters punctuation before capitalization? And as has been asked previously, is there any evidence to support the notion that one should master one particular form before writing another? More basically, it seems questionable whether teaching the skills in isolation really improves the students' writing.

Despite this criticism, the task analysis approach at least alerts the teacher to the problems his students may have in achieving a particular objective and to the need for formative evaluation, that evaluation which occurs during the process of learning rather than at

the end of the unit For a further discussion of task analysis as it relates to planning see *Systematic Planning* Chapter 3 pp 55 58

**Table of specifications** A third way to determine what student performance to measure and evaluate is to construct a table of specifications which spells out in some detail the relationship between content skills and expected student performance with regard to them In constructing such a table as in other methods the teacher must consider and clarify his own biases and objectives and determine just what aspects of student behavior he intends to observe

To construct a table of specifications the teacher first states his objectives in broad general terms perhaps getting suggestions from a guide such as the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* His next step is to analyze each objective and to determine its content and behavioral components He then can construct the table itself a two dimensional chart with behavior listed on one axis and content or skill areas specified along the other A very general table for an English course might look like the following

Content	Behavior		
	Cognitive	Affective	Skills
Literature	_____	_____	_____
Rhetoric	_____	_____	_____
Language	_____	_____	_____
Media	_____	_____	_____

The details of such a table may vary considerably depending on the teacher and the situation Alan C Purves constructing a table to guide evaluation of a particular literature series includes the following behavior creating valuing evaluating generalizing interpreting relating discriminating and describing<sup>26</sup> A table for Fader's *Hooked on Books* program would emphasize behavior such as responds expresses engagement with expresses interpretation of is willing to respond and takes satisfaction in responding<sup>27</sup>

26 Charles R Cooper and Alan C. Purves *A Guide to Evaluation* (Lexington Mass Ginn 1973) p 3 This is a guide to the evaluation sequence for the Ginn literature series *Responding*

27 This tabular interpretation of Fader's technique is included in Purves's *Evaluation of Learning in Literature* in Bloom Handbook p 722

Once completed, the matrix provides a model of the course objectives. The teacher then may wish to consider the various cells in the model and decide which ones should receive the greatest stress. In the general model presented above, for instance, the teacher might wish to emphasize developing affective responses to literature, paying relatively little attention to such cognitive concerns as students' knowledge about literature or their ability to analyze literary works. On the other hand, he may wish to emphasize cognitive behavior related to the mass media, particularly students' knowledge of how media are controlled and their ability to analyze the elements of a media presentation. Whatever value he assigns to particular cells, this value should be reflected in his tests and evaluations. It makes little sense to emphasize affective response to literature while testing and grading exclusively in the cognitive domain.

An important distinction should be noted between the development of a table of specifications and a task analysis. Whereas the task analysis provides the teacher with a guide to procedures and the sequencing of instruction, the table merely helps to order objectives. Task analysis suggests various subskills and subordinate objectives to be evaluated to see how well a student is progressing toward the main objective. The table of specifications suggests only the final objectives. In a task analysis, each objective is related to other objectives, but in a table no relationship among the various cells is necessary. Even if behaviors are arranged in order of increasing complexity or abstractness, there is no reason to assume that they are necessarily interdependent. In the sample table, for instance, willingness to attend to literature (a low-level affective behavior) would be far removed from comprehension of literature (a low-level cognitive behavior), yet without the affective behavior, the cognitive behavior is unlikely to be achieved.<sup>28</sup>

The teacher who has specified his objectives has a guide to help him collect and evaluate information about his students and the effects of his teaching. He is in a position to find ways to collect the data, either formally or informally, and then to diagnose, measure growth, or determine achievement. Although teachers should be familiar with a variety of alternatives available to them when selecting objectives, they need not ignore their students. When students are involved in the process of selecting goals, they are more apt to become involved in trying to achieve them.

28 For an extensive discussion of the uses of task analysis and tables of specification and a wealth of information about evaluation instruments, see Benjamin S. Bloom, J. Thomas Hastings, and George F. Madaus, *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

**GRADES** Whatever criteria the teacher applies to a particular student performance, and whatever form he ordinarily chooses to express his judgment, in most schools he must eventually consider the problem of grades. Although personal conferences, anecdotal remarks on a student's paper, expressions of encouragement, test scores, peer evaluation, or precise prescriptions for improvement may be the best way to handle evaluation in the classroom, the customary system for recording and reporting student progress and achievement is still the number or letter grade on the student's report card. However inadequate and imprecise these symbols may be, they become part of the student's permanent school record and they may play an important part in determining his future.

Regardless of a teacher's feeling about grades, students, parents, and some administrators take them quite seriously. In many schools teachers must submit their grade lists to the administration each marking period, and they may be asked to justify giving too many or too few high grades. Even if he is personally reluctant to turn every assignment and test score into a grade, a teacher often feels compelled to obtain as many marks as possible in his grade book to defend himself from irate parents and dissatisfied students.

Ideally, of course, a teacher's judgments are always clear, fair, useful, and acceptable to the student, but in actuality, students usually have very little say in how they are graded and the grades they get are frequently more of a mystery than a help. As stated previously, everyone knows that teachers do not all grade in the same way. Whether on tests, compositions or report cards grades may reflect any or a combination of the following:

- 1 A student's achievement or performance relative to a particular standard (This composition is 'good' because it contains no grammatical errors.)
- 2 His performance relative to other students
- 3 His performance relative to his assumed abilities
- 4 His effort
- 5 His improvement

Although the second criterion may be the most frequently used, most teachers probably favor the first as the closest approximation to what people believe grades mean. The problem with fixed standards, however, is that despite their seeming objectivity, in all but the most mechanical matters considerable subjective judgment is required to assess the quality of a student's performance or work. It is well known, for instance, and has already been demonstrated here, that the same composition can receive a wide variety of grades from

different teachers, and even from the same teacher reading it at different times. Equally well-qualified teachers may have different opinions about the right or best answer to a particular objective test item, and the selection of items to include on an objective test involves subjective value judgments.

Various alternatives have been proposed to correct the vagaries of conventional grading systems, and although none has been widely accepted, the teacher may want to adapt one of them for use with his own classes. Whatever system he uses, he should discuss it with his students. At the very least, they should understand how the teacher intends to grade and what his priorities and objectives are, even if they are not permitted to influence the procedure. In general, the more involved students are in controlling their grades, the more they are willing and able to accept responsibility, and the more likely they are to benefit from the process.

**Grading on Task Completion.** Barrett John Mandel advocates grading flexibly on a quantitative rather than a qualitative basis. At the beginning of the course he suggests that teachers discuss three groups of projects, a "C" group, a "B" group, and an "A" group. Each student then has the option of choosing his project, with the teacher's permission and advice. Students who want an "A" must complete one project from each set, for a "B" they choose a "B" and "C" project, and for a "C" they only need to do one project. Although the teacher comments on the projects, his judgment does not influence the grade. As soon as a project is handed in, the grade is awarded, regardless of quality.<sup>29</sup>

**Contract Grading.** A variation of the approach Mandel advocates involves having a class, group, or individual work out a plan of study and performance with the teacher. Students singly or as a group then "contract" for the type, quantity, and quality of work they will accomplish in a particular course or topic. Although quality criteria are often stipulated in the contracts, the system tends to emphasize quantity of work.

**Self-Grading.** At the end of a marking period, teachers ask their students to write a self-evaluation, noting the amount and quality of work done and grade deserved. The criteria to be applied may be stipulated by the teacher, decided by the class, or left up to the individual student. The teacher then either accepts and records the grade the student gives himself, or a compromise grade is worked out in conference.

**Grades Negotiated on Teacher's Written Evaluation.** At the end of the marking period, a teacher writes up an evaluation of each

29. Barrett John Mandel, "Teaching Without Judging," *College English* 34 (Feb. 1973): pp. 628-29. It is interesting that, as Mandel observes in a footnote, adverse pressure from his college deans forced him to modify the approach he is advocating.

student perhaps using a check list giving his judgment of the student's strengths weaknesses and accomplishments. The students then respond to these evaluations and recommend grades for themselves which also may be negotiated subsequently with the teacher. This is perhaps the most time consuming of all the alternatives.

**Mastery or Performance Grading.** Here the teacher establishes his course objectives in behavioral terms and stipulates A, B, and C levels of mastery. At the outset he informs his students of these objectives, gives them various ways to accomplish them and shows ways to demonstrate their mastery. Students may then work individually, in groups, or as a class to achieve the objectives and the teacher records the performance and grade when individuals or groups are ready. In theory, there is no need for a failing grade with this system since the students either achieve the objective at a passing level or they do not. In which case they try again until they succeed.

**Base Grade Grading.** In this method the teacher informs the class of the quantity of work which must be acceptably completed in order to get the base grade, usually a B. Students who wish to achieve a higher grade must do the required work plus additional projects. Students whose work does not prove acceptable may be permitted to re-do the work until it is.<sup>30</sup>

With the exception of task completion grading, none of the systems just analyzed relieves the teacher of the responsibility of making some qualitative judgments about students' work. They do, however, clarify the grading process for the student and in most instances involve him in it. Even mastery grading, which is most like a conventional grading system, provides the student with a clear understanding of what he must do and what his goals must be.

**OBJECTIVITY IN EVALUATION.** In evaluating students, the criteria of fairness and objectivity are not always the most helpful factors to consider. Felt success and genuine accomplishment are important elements in motivation and achievement should probably be recognized and rewarded. But too often teacher approval and external rewards become more important than personal satisfaction in accomplishment and the public recognition of achievement in some is too often accompanied by the public condemnation of failure in others. Parents, students, and teachers have good reasons for wanting to know the truth about a student's abilities and achievements in English, but the truth about a student's performance in language

30. For a number of additional suggestions on grading and alternative systems see Howard Kirschenbaum, Sidney B. Simon, and Rodney W. Napier, *Wadja Get? The Grading Game in American Education* (New York: Hart, 1971), Appendix B (pp. 292-307). Lists and explains a number of alternative grading systems.

literature, and communication is not easily reduced to objective measurements or conveyed by numbers or letter grades. What truth is conveyed, for instance, in a "D" grade? Does it signify the student's ability? The quality of the work he actually does? Or, more likely, his motivation, and the fact that he did not attempt to do very much of the work? A student's unwillingness to do school work generally or work in a particular subject is, of course, an important thing to know about him, but it seems questionable whether a permanent English grade is the best way to record the fact.

At times, very subjective evaluation is necessary if a student is to be helped. The teacher must often decide whether it is more important to evaluate his work, his attitude, or his state of mind. The objective value of the student's work product may be much less significant than whether, at this particular point, he most needs a pat on the back, a push, or a clear sense of what he must do to improve. Thus, the question of "fairness" may be quite irrelevant to helping a student to learn.

Perhaps the most useful notion of "objectivity" for the classroom teacher is the recognition of his own particular biases in evaluating students. Research shows that in dealing with and grading students teachers are influenced by such factors as the student's sex, race, social background, reputation in the school, general behavior, and personality. The overly mechanical "objective" procedures intended to reduce the effects of such biases—such as mathematically averaging grade-book marks—may disguise these effects, but do not remove them. The effects of a teacher's personal attitudes toward students are probably reflected in every test and composition grade in his book. Teachers are no more or less liable to prejudice and personality clashes than anyone else, but they do have a responsibility to see that these do not hurt their students. An awareness of the problem is a necessary first step in controlling it.

In addition to personal biases, evaluations may also be unduly influenced by the teacher's desire to create his own image. A teacher's grading practices become part of his reputation in a school, and beginning teachers in particular are often advised to be hard graders in order to establish their authority and control over students. In schools with a strong academic orientation and with students who are particularly grade-conscious, this approach, in fact, may work. However, grades and threats are poor substitutes for interest and involvement as motivators. They are ineffective with a great many students and virtually useless with students who have already become quite used to getting poor grades. The teacher who becomes concerned with his reputation as a hard or an easy grader may need to take a good look at his teaching priorities. When teachers use grades to establish a self-image, student learning usually suffers.



**EVALUATION PROBLEMS IN THE CLASSROOM** The problem of evaluation is not an entirely theoretical one for the classroom teacher. He cannot avoid testing, giving assignments and grading and his situation is further complicated if, as in student teaching, someone is looking over his shoulder and insisting on criteria he does not agree with. Even if the teacher is permitted to evaluate in his own way, however, he will be faced with dilemmas such as the following and there are no easy solutions to them.

How can I evaluate honestly without discouraging the less able student? All external evaluation is potentially threatening. Teachers have only to remember their own apprehensions concerning college exams or job interviews to realize this. One way to relieve the problem is to avoid basing evaluation on narrow criteria. With as broad a subject as English, there are few students who cannot experience some success if they are given the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do. The simple expedient of evaluating without grading may also help reduce the threat. Why must every essay, exam, quiz, and composition result in a recorded grade? For the student who does not like to write, for instance, a composition may best be used as an opportunity to praise and encourage his effort. If a student does poorly on a test, why should he not be given the opportunity to try learning the material and taking the test again? If a student fails an exam because he has obviously not done the required reading, there are several important questions to consider. Is it really important for him to do the reading? Is he capable of doing it? Given the opportunity and added motivation, can he be persuaded to do it? Is it more useful to record a failing grade reflecting a failure to do rather than a failure to be able to do or to test again later?

How can I manage the paperwork involved in individual rather than group evaluation? Making qualitative judgments takes time, which is why some teachers prefer the task completion and contract grading systems described earlier. However, by using check lists and allowing students to keep some of their own records, teachers can free themselves somewhat. The time required to correct and grade each composition might be used more profitably by spending an equal amount of time on every third composition or the one in four that the student feels represents his best work. If students can be taught to use class time wisely and not to depend constantly on the teacher, he can devote some of the excess to individual conferences and to book-keeping chores such as checking students' folders and filling out check lists.

How can I avoid using grades and tests to motivate students who have been conditioned to respond to such motivation? As the NCTE policy on grading states, "To abandon all grades suddenly would be to eliminate the major stimulus that many students have been con-

ditioned to respond to " In any case the teacher must start where his students are in grading as in everything else. However, he also can begin to move them beyond that point. He may, for instance, discuss grades and alternative grading systems with students, urging them to assume more responsibility in grading themselves. He may set up a committee of students to discuss and make recommendations regarding the grading system, perhaps following the student activities pictured in *Wod Jo Get? The Grading Game in American Education*.<sup>31</sup> The teacher cannot realistically abandon grades and tests in most schools but he can try to avoid becoming dependent on them.

How can I keep my role as judge from interfering with my relationship with students? Teachers have traditionally maintained a "proper distance" from students in part to maintain their objectivity in evaluating them. The more personally a teacher knows a student, the more difficult it is to render an impartial assessment of his work. The teacher who manages to get through to a discouraged or alienated student often finds himself in a real dilemma at report card time. Will an 'honest' grade reflecting the actual quality of the student's work discourage him and perhaps undo the progress that has been made? Will a higher grade reflecting progress and effort cause him to slack off and take advantage of the teacher's concern? Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to such questions, even if the teacher does not get sidetracked by the question. Is it "fair" to reward inferior work equally with higher quality work? As has been pointed out again and again, in general success is a far greater motivator than failure. If one agrees with Carl Rogers and other humanistic psychologists that real learning and growth occur best in an open, nonthreatening environment, the role of a distant, impartial judge is not very attractive or useful for a teacher.

What can I do about an obviously talented student whose class work is mediocre? The teacher's ability to deal with such problems will depend upon the strictness of the school's grading policies. If student grades must reflect a forty percent emphasis on grammar and the student simply refuses to learn grammar, there is little the teacher can do but to help the student understand the realities of institutional pressure. If the teacher is under no such restriction however he can weigh the merits of the conflicting data he must work with. Which is more important to consider, the student's exceptional creative writing talents and his impressive independent reading or his test scores and grades on expository compositions? Again there is no easy answer.

31 Ibid. Most of this book is presented as the discussion and reporting conducted by a hypothetical student committee on grading.

It is true as many teachers argue that in the real world a person is evaluated on the basis of the work he actually does on the job not on what he can do or does do on his own. However it may also be true that the student's independent performance reveals much more about his real world English abilities than does his school work. Few teachers want to be remembered as having given a future poet laureate a 'D' in English.

Throughout this chapter the emphasis has been on evaluating in a manner that improves teaching and learning. Many teachers contend that frequent competitive rigorous evaluation of student work accomplishes these ends by promoting high standards of performance and the satisfaction which comes from genuine achievement. The point of view expressed here however is that such an approach is more likely to be harmful than helpful in today's schools. It puts far too much stress on external rather than on self evaluation and it produces an unconscionable number of casualties. As William Glasser says in *Schools Without Failure* the main thing one learns from failure is how to fail.

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Berger Allen and Smith Blanche Hope eds. *Measure for Measure: Classroom Practices in Teaching English 1972-1973*. Urbana Ill. NCTE 1972. This book contains a number of articles and NCTE resolutions dealing with evaluation of students and with teacher accountability.

Bloom Benjamin S. ed. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. New York: McKay 1956. As discussed in this chapter the Taxonomy provides a great many evaluation questions and test items organized into a cognitive hierarchy. (See also David R. Krathwohl Benjamin S. Bloom and Bertram B. Masia. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook II: Affective Domain*. By the same publisher 1964.)

Bloom Benjamin S. Hastings J. Thomas and Madaus George F. eds. *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning* (New York: McGraw Hill 1971). This book is a readable comprehensive introduction to the problems and practices of educational evaluation. Introductory chapters deal with the nature and uses of evaluation techniques for cognitive and affective evaluation and evaluation systems. In Part 2 several chapters are of interest to English teachers. Evaluation of

**Learning in the Language Arts** by Walter J Moore and Lorry D Kennedy  
**Evaluation of Learning in Literature** by Alon C Purves and **Evaluation of Learning in Writing** by Joseph J Foley All of these chapters are organized around tables of specification listing behavior and content to be evaluated

**Carruthers Robert B Building Better English Tests A Guide for Teachers of English in the Secondary Schools** Urbana Ill NCTE 1963 Although somewhat dated this publication offers a guide to conventional test construction and may help the teacher avoid some pitfalls

**College Entrance Examination Board Commission on English End of Year Examinations in English for College Bound Students Grades 9-12** Princeton NJ CEEB 1963 Available from NCTE this book contains sample examination questions in literature language and composition for each of the high school grades with good average and poor student responses and evaluators' comments on them Test items are interesting and useful although they measure rather limited cognitive achievements

**English Teacher Preparation Study Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English** Published in the April 1968 English Journal and available from NCTE in pamphlet form These guidelines may be useful to the prospective English teacher wishing to evaluate his background and preparation against some perhaps idealistic standards The guidelines will not however tell the teacher much about his actual classroom performance or how well he facilitates learning for his students Another form of background check list is contained in J N Hook Paul H Jacobs and Raymond D Crisp's **What Every English Teacher Should Know** Urbana Ill NCTE 1970

**Fader Daniel N and McNeill Elton B Hooked on Books Program & Proof** New York Berkley 1968 Part Two of this book written by McNeill describes the procedures used to evaluate Fader's program The authors suggest a number of interesting and innovative ways to obtain information from and about students and teachers Several of the forms and questionnaires could be used in any English class

**Judine Sister I H M ed A Guide for Evaluating Student Compositions** Urbana Ill NCTE 1965 This book contains a number of useful suggestions for ways to evaluate student writing

**Kirschenbaum Howard A Simon Sidney and Napier Rodney W WAD JA GET? The Grading Game in American Education** New York Hart 1971 This book builds a strong case against grades and presents teachers with a number of practical alternatives and ways to reduce the harmful effects of grading Several chapters suggest ways of getting students involved in considering grades and assuming responsibility in the evaluation process

**Maloney Henry B ed Goal Making for English Teaching** Urbana Ill NCTE 1973 This volume contains articles intended to bridge the gap between behavioral and humanistic objectives The anti-behaviorists seem to have the edge

Maloney Henry B. ed. *Accountability and the Teaching of English*. Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1973. Intended as a companion piece for NCTE's earlier *On Writing Behavioral Objectives in English*, although generally less practical than the first book, this collection includes several provocative papers both pro and con on the accountability movement and a few practical suggestions for the evaluation of teaching. Note especially Robert Zoellner's "S-R versus S-R-R: The Problem of Behavioral Objectives," pp. 125-43.

## A CODA FOR PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

Although this book is designed for use by both prospective teachers of English and teachers already in service certain concerns evident today make it appropriate to address this coda to prospective teachers using the book in connection with their training

The immediate future for the student preparing to teach English in the secondary schools is in some ways not encouraging at this time. First there is a reported national oversupply of secondary school teachers of English. However the market situation varies considerably from region to region and even from community to community and it seems apparent that neophyte teachers with the mobility to go where teaching positions are available can get jobs. Also the lessened demand for English teachers in secondary schools is countered to an extent by new demands such as those for English specialists in elementary schools and for teachers of high school level English courses in adult evening schools or in other forms of adult education. Nonetheless preparing to be an English teacher generally may seem to be a chancy undertaking.

Second there is a convulsion now taking place in American public education a factor which the authors always have attempted to keep in mind throughout this book. Schools are being criticized as prisons as stiflers of creativity and individual development and as purveyors of ossified content by the romantic critics of education. On the other hand those in the accountability movement are demanding that teachers demonstrate measurable progress in their students and systems approaches have been devised that supposedly lead to ineluctable outcomes.

Convulsions occur periodically in education they are followed by periods of stabilization and ultimately to the over stabilization that once more produces convulsion. An earlier paroxysm occurred shortly

after World War II. Then the cries of the educational critics condemned "anti intellectualism," "over-permissiveness," and "frills." They demanded emphasis on content and on the basic skills which purportedly were being neglected.

## IS ENGLISH PASSÉ?

But even if the prospective teacher has developed perspective on the educational scene, he can be much less sure today than he could be a few years ago of the context in which he will do his teaching. Discussion of "alternative schools," "portal schools," "store front schools," "open schools," and "street schools" surely must cause many prospective teachers of English to wonder, "Where do I fit in and where does English fit in to all of this?"

Although this perplexity may be specifically fostered by the present scene, it relates to a perennial teaching problem—the relation of knowledge to changing social and individual needs. The great areas of human knowledge—the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities—are still the bedrock of education as they always have been. Yet it is continually necessary to adjust the focus of these areas of knowledge to changing social conditions. Societal waves immediately rock society's microcosm, the schools. Today, although such concerns as human relations and environmental, leisure, and career education are rampant, colleges and universities are still being asked to prepare teachers of English. The reason for this is the assumption that the major areas of human knowledge, growing continually themselves, can encompass whatever concerns may emerge, and that teachers in various subject disciplines can attune their teaching to the changing concerns and to school formats which serve to accommodate these concerns. Societal needs and school formats change. English teachers remain.

Not the same kinds of English teachers necessarily. They change, too. Certainly the role of the English teacher in a classroom learning situation has changed from that of only a decade or so ago. This book should have made clear that the teacher no longer pumps knowledge but instead manages the learning environment in which he and his students find themselves.

This book should have shown, too, that the teacher of today deals with new concepts of achievement in English. With the highly elitist barriers of the past falling, the linguistically untalented student no longer needs to fail in English, and no longer is English appealing only to a clientele of upper- and middle class linguistically talented girls who for decades were the chief enthusiasts of the English class.

Yet unquestionably, the conflicting pressures of greater relevance

take refuge in one of two extreme courses of action "Anything goes that turns them on" is the first extreme Remember Gloria Summers from our opening sketch in Chapter 1? "Back to basic skills, to the bare bones of fundamentals, to the things we can measure" is the other extreme, as Mr. Olds illustrated in our opening sketch This book has attempted to provide the basis for choices and decisions that can lead the English teacher down a path between these extremes to the process- and student-centered curriculum in which the recognizable content of English is not *passé*

## PERSONALITY AND THE ENGLISH TEACHER

Added to the common concerns of prospective English teachers today is another worry about the fit of their personalities with that of the professional, successful, or ideal teacher of English Rather frequently, the prospective teacher has the notion that there is a teaching personality which his must model This book should have largely dispelled that notion The stereotyped image of the English teacher that long had been in the mind of the American public—ona of prunes and prisms primness, of innocuousness, of colorlessness—largely has broken down Although successful teachers of English may share a few very general traits, there is a place in the teaching profession as in any other for many personalities Very different kinds of English teachers may be able to bring favorable responses from students There are those students, for example who are enthusiastic about a taskmaster "She was tough but she was fair, she really made me learn!" And, of course, the low-pressure, thoughtful type has his devotees "He made me think, he made me get the answers for myself" The enthusiastic type often scores, too, as long as enthusiasm is sufficiently restrained "She really made me like the stuff!" And then there is the warm, motherly or fatherly type to whom some students immediately turn with personal problems The catalog could go on Individual differences are as inevitable and as important among teachers as among students Then too as stressed earlier in this book evaluation of teaching success is being geared more and more to how much teachers can produce by way of changed behavior how much they can accomplish in improving student skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, tastes, responses and not merely to how charismatically he comes on as performer or individual

It is this that may be one of the most significant indications that English teachers, as other teachers, are at last viewed as true professionals entrusted with important responsibilities in a still optimistic society

It is this that frequently sends Sharon Helper home weary but fulfilled



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# Appendix A

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## ONE HUNDRED JUNIOR NOVELS FOR ENGLISH CLASSES

1 Alexander Lloyd *The Block Couldron* New York Holt 1965  
Taran assistant Pig Keeper is launched into a series of fanciful  
mysterious and mythical adventures in the land of Prydain One of  
several excellent books of fantasy by this author

2 Annixter Paul *Swiftwater* New York Hill and Wang 1950  
Through the Calloway family the author presents trappers in north  
ern Maine trying to establish a wild game preserve an interesting  
and usually successful way of introducing students to symbolism

3 Armstrong William H *Sounder* New York Harper 1969 Set  
in the Depression south the novel centers on one black family and  
their dog Sounder This is a persuasive novel about the initiation of  
a young boy into an often alien society

4 Balducci Carolyn *Is There a Life after Graduation* Henry Birn  
baum? Boston Houghton Mifflin 1971 David Schoen begins college  
at MIT and his closest friend Henry Birnbaum goes to Oberlin to the  
tune of attempted seductions campus politics and bomb threats

5 Benchley Nathaniel *Only Earth and Sky Last Forever* New  
York Harper 1972 A young Indian raised at a government agency  
watches white men invade the Black Hills and then joins Crazy Horse  
to fight for his people

6 Bennett Jack *The Hawk Alone* Boston Little Brown 1965  
An African white hunter discovering that he is an anachronism re-  
views his life and what he has believed in This is a somber and highly  
introspective book

7 Bennett Jay *Deathman Do Not Follow Me* New York Merr  
dith 1968 A lonely high school junior finds himself involved in a  
mystery concerning a stolen Van Gogh painting Bennett has written

a suspenseful work and drawn a very successful picture of a loner, although the second half of the novel is less perceptive than the first

8 Blume, Judy *It's Not the End of the World* Scarsdale NY Bradbury, 1972 Karen Newman's parents are getting a divorce, and Karen's life is falling apart This is a realistic treatment of a real problem Karen's desperate but unsuccessful fight to bring her parents together

9 Bonham, Frank *Durango Street* New York Dutton, 1965 Rufus Henry, a black teen ager, is released from a detention center for delinquent boys and realizes he must join a street gang to survive on Durango Street

10 Byars, Betsy *The Summer of the Swans* New York Viking 1970 This is a story of two young people, Sara and her ten-year-old brother Charlie a brain damaged child, and what starts out as a very dull summer

11 Campbell, Hope *No More Troins to Tottenville* New York McCall 1972 Jane Andrews has enough problems of her own finding identity and purpose, but those problems are compounded by a brother who runs away from prep school, a father who is hard to puzzle out, and a mother who decides to leave home This book presents a good picture of some of the mores of our time and is a surprisingly funny novel

12 Carson, John F *Hotshot* New York Farrar, 1961 Dave York, high school senior and egotistical basketball hotshot, finds himself in danger of flunking out By the end of the book, he has begun to question his school's overemphasis on athletics Carson's books tend to be slightly glib and their problems are a little too easily resolved but they do reveal the author's real understanding of sports

13 Cleaver, Vera and Bill Grover New York Lippincott, 1970 Ten-year old Grover learns something about life and death and himself when his mother dies This novel about sorrow and death could have been banal or depressing but it is not

14 Cleaver, Vera and Bill *The Mimoso Tree* New York Lippincott, 1970 Crop failure strikes a North Carolina farm family, and they set off for Chicago, the city of promise In the large city, they find only dirt and slums, and they resolve to return to the country This is a novel of nobility by two sensitive writers

15 Clements, Bruce *The Face of Abrohom Cndle* New York Farrar, Straus, 1969 In 1893, Abraham Candle joined two men in a trip to collect artifacts from the Mesa Verde area The trip is not an entire success for the men or the boy, but Abraham gets much more from the trip than money

16 Connolly Edward *Deer Run* New York Scribners, 1971 A group of young people establish a communal farm and discover what it means to be outsiders as the nearby townspeople first show sus

picion and fear which grows into animosity and then physical attack on the hated hippies and their land

17 Cunningham, Julia *Dorp Dead* New York Pantheon 1965 An orphan is adopted by a strange man whose life is controlled by time The boy's escape and effort to find a home when he ultimately realizes that the man intends to kill him make up the bulk of the tale

18 Daly, Maureen *Seventeenth Summer* New York Dodd, 1942 Shy Angie finds her first love in Jack and they spend one glorious summer together before realizing that the summer was all there could be to that love Thirty years old or not the novel is read by girls today who understand that the book is still in many ways contemporary

19 Davis Russell F *Anything for a Friend* New York Crown 1963 Clarence is in love with beautiful and brainy Arabella To win her love, Clarence promises to take a black girl to the junior prom The author presents a very funny, often poignant novel about the manipulation of human beings in the name of integration

20 Davis, Russell F *Some Town You Brought Me To* New York Crown, 1969 This is a sports mystery about a young basketball player whose mother moves to a new town during his senior year Davis writes with genuine humor and understanding of young people

21 Dizenzo Patricia *Phoebe* New York McGraw Hill, 1970 This is a novel version of the short film about a pregnant girl trying to find ways to talk to her boyfriend and her parents

22 Donovan, John *I'll Get There It Better Be Worth the Trip* New York Harper, 1969 Davy moves to New York City to live with his mother There, he finds little but loneliness until he makes friends with a bright but moody classmate Their friendship develops into a physical relationship shaking both boys badly

23 Donovan John *Remove Protective Cooing a Little at a Time* New York Harper, 1973 Although Harry's parents treat him as an equal, he is deprived of any real relationship with adults Then he runs into crusty old Amelia who has learned in her many years to fend for herself

24 Donovan, John *Wild in the World* New York Harper, 1971 After his seven brothers and four sisters die, a young boy stays on the family farm by himself and is befriended by a wild dog Then the young boy develops pneumonia and dies In summary, the book sounds morbid and even depressing but it is more concerned with love and sharing than death

25 Erno, Richard B *Billy Lightfoot* New York Crown, 1969 Billy leaves his reservation to come to an Indian school in Phoenix Alienated by the white world he goes back to his reservation for as good a reason as he had for leaving it in the first place It's a nice study of cultural differences

26 Eyerly, Jeannette *Bonnie Jo Go Home* Philadelphia Lippin

cott 1972 Bonnie Jo becomes pregnant Her parents do not want an abortion but Bonnie Jo finally gets the money together and goes to New York where she has a number of sordid experiences with doctors

27 Eyerly Jeannette *Escape from Nowhere* Philadelphia Lippincott 1969 An unhappy young girl unable to compete with her more popular sister and resenting her parents move to another town starts to run with a drug oriented crowd

28 Felsen Henry G *Hot Rod* New York Dutton 1950 Bud takes a dare and hot rods his car breaking several laws in his race He is given a choice going to jail or growing up and proving it Although this is a highly moralistic and preachy book it remains popular even today

29 Forman James *My Enemy My Friend* New York Meredith 1969 A young survivor of the Nazi persecution of Warsaw Jews goes to the promised land of Israel after the war and is involved in the Arab Israeli war

30 Forman James *Ring the Judo Bell* New York Farrar Straus 1965 Captured when the Communist Andartes were trying to take over Greece Nicholas and his sister are taken to a prison camp in Albania

31 George Jean *Julie of the Wolves* New York Harper 1972 A young Eskimo girl runs away from home and finds herself lost in Alaska Gradually she is befriended by a pack of wolves This is a lovely and quite believable book

32 Hall Lynn *Sticks and Stones* Chicago Follett 1972 A bright student and excellent pianist finds himself accused of being a homosexual because he is sympathetic and compassionate

33 Hall Lynn *Too Near the Sun* Chicago Follett 1970 Set in an 1880s Iowa commune the book presents the problems of young people rebelling against the mores and ideas of their parents

34 Head Ann *Mr and Mrs Bo Jo Jones* New York Putnam 1967 A young couple who have to get married move in with the boy's lower middle class family This causes difficulties especially for the girl clearly accustomed to the finer things

35 Heinlein Robert *Have Spacesuit Will Travel* New York Scribners 1958 Kip wins a spacesuit and is involved in a trip to the moon to Pluto and to Vega This is an exciting book which can lead to a study of the relationships between human beings and between countries

36 Heinlein Robert *Space Cadet* New York Scribners 1948 In 2075 Matt Dodson becomes a member of the interplanetary space cadets and voyages to Venus

37 Hentoff Nat *I'm Really Dragged But Nothing Gets Me Down* New York Simon and Schuster 1968 Nearing his eighteenth birthday Jeremy must decide whether he will protest the war and stay at home or flee to Canada

38 Hentoff Nat *In the Country of Ourselves* New York Simon and Schuster 1971 A robbie rousing teacher and several young revolutionaries disrupt an entire high school

39 Hinton S E *The Outsiders* New York Viking 1967 A sensitive young orphan gets involved in a rumble between the Socs and the Greasers This is one of the most popular junior books ever written

40 Hosford Jessie *An Awful Nome to Live up to* New York Meredith 1969 Written as a diary of a young girl in 1901 Nebraska the novel shows her gradual maturation from young girl to mature woman

41 Hunt Irene *Across Five Aprils* Chicago Follett 1964 The author presents five years of family life during the Civil War through the eyes of young Jethro

42 Hunt Irene *No Promises in the Wind* Chicago Follett 1970 Two boys leave depression Chicago and find starvation and loneliness but finally compassion and love

43 Hunter Kristin *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou* New York Scribners 1968 Young blacks in a northern city ghetto struggle to find identity and purpose At a funeral they sing a lament for a friend and from this comes a musical group

44 Johnson A E *A Blues I Can Whistle* New York Four Winds 1969 After an unsuccessful attempt at suicide a young boy with everything to live for tries to find out who he is and why he tried to kill himself

45 Johnson Annabel and Edgar *Count Me Cone* New York Simon and Schuster 1968 Lying in a hospital bed after an automobile accident an upper middle class dropout tries to figure out what caused it all

46 Jordan June *His Own Where* New York Crowell 1971 This is a love story of two young blacks Buddy and Angela and their desperate efforts to cling to each other Told in black dialect this brief book has been widely read

47 Kerr M E *If I Love You Am I Trapped Forever?* New York Harper 1973 Handsome and highly successful sixteen year old Alan has his entire world toppled when plain and balding Duncan becomes the most popular boy in the school

48 Konigsburg E L *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs Basil E Frankweiler* New York Atheneum 1967 Two young people run away from home live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and become involved in a mystery about a statue

49 Konigsburg E L *Jennifer Hecate Macbeth* William Mc Kinley and Me *Elizabeth* New York Atheneum 1967 Elizabeth may be the loneliest girl in New York City until she meets Jennifer a young witch From then on Elizabeth's life is not dull

50 Lacy, Ed *Sleep in Thunder* New York Grosset and Dunlap 1964 José becomes involved in a murder and robbery in an exciting novel about young immigrants

51 Lee, Mildred *The Skating Rink* New York Seabury, 1969 Young Tuck Farady has almost retreated from reality because of his speech defect. However, the owner of a roller-skating rink befriends him, and he finds a place in the world for himself

52 L'Engle, Madeleine *A Wrinkle in Time* New York Farrar, Straus, 1962 This is a fantastic science fiction novel of three time-travelers. A Newbery Award winner, deservedly so

53 Lipsyte, Robert *The Contender* New York Harper, 1967 A young black boy finds an oasis from crime in the boxing rink. This is one of the very best sports books, the author knows boxing, and he knows the smell of the boxing arena

54 Marshall, James V *Wolabout* New York Morrow, 1971 Two young Australians are stranded far from civilization and are saved from death by an Aboriginal boy who is on his walkabout, his test of manhood. It's a lovely and moving account of the contact of different kinds of cultures

55 McKay, Robert *Dove's Song* New York Meredith, 1967 A small town girl has no particular aim except to escape her town. Then she discovers Dave, who changes her mind. McKay writes a simple and charming book which many young people have taken to in almost the same way they have taken to the movie *Billy Jack*

56 Merrill, Jean *The Pushcart War* New York Scott, 1964 In 1976 the pushcart operators and the truck drivers of New York City declare war on each other. This novel purports to be an historical account of that war, its generals, its battles, and its resolution. It's a delightful introduction to satire, capable of being read on several levels

57 Neufeld John *Edgar Allon* New York Phillips, 1966 A minister and his wife decide to adopt a young black child, and the results disrupt the entire family and bring into question what the individual members of the family believe in

58 Neufeld, John *Lisa, Bright and Dork* New York Phillips, 1969 Lisa Shilling an attractive sixteen year old, senses correctly that she is slowly going mad. Friends try to help her while her two obtuse parents stand by unaware that anything is wrong

59 Neufeld John *Sleep, Two Three Four!* New York Harper 1971 A horror science fiction tale of a world gone mad with a dictator ruling the United States and only a few young people rebelling

60 Neufeld John *Touching* New York Phillips 1970 When Harry's father remarries Harry finds he has a sister with cerebral palsy. Harry's adjustment to his new status and new sister makes up a very fine novel. This book was also published under the title *Twink*

61 Ney John Ox *The Story of a Kid at the Top* Boston Little Brown 1970 Franklin Olmstead better known as Ox comes from a wealthy family who has never paid a moment's attention to him. When his teacher assigns him to write a composition on Cows Ox is helped by his father and his father's jet set friends who fly from hither to thither having fun and doing nothing to help Ox. This is a surprisingly funny and sad novel about a rejected child.

62 O Dell Scott *Island of the Blue Dolphins* Boston Houghton Mifflin 1960 Based on a real incident the novel concerns a young Indian girl accidentally left on an island who lives there for eighteen years befriended only by a wild dog she tames.

63 Platt Kin *The Boy Who Could Make Himself Disappear* Philadelphia Chilton 1968 Roger's speech impediment is not helped by his parents' divorce. Moving to New York City with his mother Roger finds some people who really do care for him and leave him with some reason for hope.

64 Pomeroy Pete *Wipeout!* New York Four Winds 1968 Taft Farroll is bitten by the surfing bug. His father not impressed with his son's choice of sports tries to get surfing banned by the townspeople. Pomeroy has written one of the more successful novels about the generation gap.

65 Rawls Wilson *Where the Red Fern Grows* New York Macmillan 1961 Billy saves his money to buy two coon hounds which he trains into champions. He feels only love for them and only horror when they die. This is a beautiful novel about a young boy learning trust and patience and faith.

66 Renvoize Jean *A Wild Thing* Boston Little Brown 1971 Morag runs away from home into the wilderness. There she lives feared by the town. There she finds a kind of love with Jack and there she gives birth and dies. This is one of the most mature of the junior novels.

67 Richard Adrienne *Pistol* Boston Little Brown 1965 Billy Catlett grows up as a ranch hand in depression time Montana. The book presents a distinctly nonromanticized picture of the West and the difficulties of living in lonely places.

68 Sandoz Mari *The Story Catcher* Philadelphia Westminster 1957 Young Lance becomes the leader of his clan and after many years earns his adult name Story Catcher the historian of his people.

69 Sherburne Zoa *The Girl Who Knew Tomorrow* New York Morrow 1970 A fifteen year old girl discovers that she can foretell the future a wondrous gift that brings wealth and fame and success and everything except a normal growing up and happiness.

70 Sherburne Zoa *Too Bad about the Haines Girl* New York Morrow 1967 A popular senior becomes pregnant and puts off telling her parents. Although this is one of the standard themes of girls' books.

of the late 1960s, this time it's realistically handled

71 Sorensen, Virginia *Plain Girl* New York Harcourt, 1955 An Amish girl recognizes for the first time, how different she and her parents are when she enters a public school at age ten This is an alive novel about change and the necessity of change, sad though it often is

72 Speare, Elizabeth *The Bronze Bow* Boston Houghton Mifflin 1961 This is a story of a young boy in the time of Jesus It is one of several historical novels by Mrs Speare, all of them well worth reading both for their sense of history and for sheer enjoyment

73 Sperry, Armstrong *Call It Courage* New York Macmillan, 1940 This is a brief and mythic story of a Polynesian boy who fears the sea and sets out on a trip to conquer his fear

74 Steele, Mary Q *Journey Outside* New York Viking, 1969 Floating down the underground river on a raft with his grandfather, Dilar jumps onto a rock and from that into a completely new, frightening and beautiful world Ms Steele has written a poetic, strange, and mysterious novel

75 Stolz, Mary *By the Highway Home* New York Harper, 1971 This book concerns the gradual, almost imperceptible, growing up of a young girl as she rebounds from a brother's death in Vietnam and a father's lost job

76 Stolz, Mary *Leap Before You Look* New York Harper, 1972 A naive young girl with parents near divorce suddenly becomes aware of the chasm lying between them

77 Stolz, Mary *A Love, Or a Season* New York Harper, 1954 Harry Lynch and Nan Gunning fall in love during a summer vacation Harry tries to live with his increasingly complex love for Nan, his feelings about his father, and his mother's death

78 Stolz, Mary *Proy Love, Remember* New York Harper 1954 Dody Jenks is outwardly one of the most popular girls in her school Unhappily, Dody finds very little to like about herself until after graduation a job as a governess and a love affair make her aware of what she can be

79 Stoutenberg, Adrien *Out There* New York Viking 1971 Set in the twenty first century, when civilization exists only under domes this science fiction novel features a group of young men on a journey and makes a plea for ecology

80 Summers, James L *The Iron Doors Between* Philadelphia Westminster, 1968 Although two foster parents genuinely try to help Vic Shan, they are doomed to failure, and Vic returns to prison

81 Summers, James L *You Can't Make It by Bus* Philadelphia Westminster, 1969 Paul Guevara finds himself in a city that cannot accept him as a first class citizen, and he is torn between his conservative father and revolutionary Chicano friends

82 Sutcliff, Rosemary *Outcast* New York Walck 1955 During



Rome's occupation of Britain, an orphan brought up by a tribe of Britains finds difficulty in determining whether he owes loyalty to his Roman heritage or to the tribe who raised him

83 Sutchiff, Rosemary *The Silver Branch* New York Walck, 1959 A young Roman surgeon is sent to Britain where he is involved in adventures and battles

84 Swarthout Glendon and Kathryn Whichawoy New York Random, 1966 A boy on an Arizona ranch is stranded with two broken legs on top of a windmill

85 Townsend, John Rowe *Goodbye to the Jungle* Philadelphia Lippincott, 1967 Two English youngsters go to live with their shiftless uncle after the death of their parents Townsend paints a sometimes grim picture of life in an inner-city English slum

86 Townsend, John Rowe *Good Night Prof* Dear Philadelphia Lippincott, 1971 While his parents are away on an Irish vacation, Graham Hollis meets and has a love affair with Lynn

87 Tunis, John R. *Go, Team, Go!* New York Morrow, 1954 An all-star basketball team returns for its senior year, cocky and sure it will go to the state tournament When one of the players is expelled from school for acting as a bookie, the rest of the team quits and the coach is left with the task of creating a new team

88 Tunis, John R. *His Enemy, His Friend* New York Morrow, 1967 During World War II, Germans controlling a small French town shoot some hostages Years later, the son of one of the slain men and a German who seemed responsible for the killings face each other in a soccer match It is a fine novel about guilt and love

89 Ullman, James Ramsey *Banner in the Sky* Philadelphia Lippincott, 1954 Rudi Matt's greatest ambition is to climb the Citadel a mountain which has never been conquered This book was also published under the title *Thud Mon on the Mountain*

90 Wersba, Barbara *The Dream Watcher* New York Atheneum, 1968 Albert Scully, despite his Willy Loman kind of father, doesn't seem to have any goal or dream Indeed, not until he meets an aging actress does he like or accept himself

91 Wersba, Barbara *Run Softly, Go Fast* New York Atheneum, 1979 After the death of his businessman father, Davy Marks reflects on their relationship, what led to it, and what it led to

92 Wier, Ester *The Loner* New York McKay, 1963 David a loner, wanders to Montana and spends a winter with a sheepman finding who he is and proving his manhood

93 Winterfield, Henry *Detectives in Togas* New York Harcourt, 1956 Some Roman boys find words scrawled on the wall of the temple, words insulting to the Emperor They turn detective to determine the guilt of an accused classmate

94 Wojciechowska, Maia *Don't Play Dead Before You Have To*

New York Harper, 1970 Byron befriends young Charlie, whose parents are divorced This honest and believable book covers four years in the lives of two young and confused but nice boys

95 Wojciechowska, Maia *Shadow of a Bull* New York Atheneum, 1964 Manolo, son of the greatest bullfighter in Spain, is constantly reminded by everyone that they expect him to be an even greater fighter Manolo does not want to be like his father but instead wants to run his own life

96 Wojciechowska, Maia *A Single Light* New York Harper, 1968 A child born deaf and mute finds love only in the animals she cares for Later she goes to live with a priest and finds a statue and love

97 Young, Bob and Jan *Across the Tracks* New York Messner, 1958 A young Mexican-American girl finds herself ashamed of her heritage but later reconciles the best of her native traditions with her Anglo friends' beliefs

98 Zindel, Paul *I Never Loved Your Mind* New York Harper, 1970 Yvette, a vegetarian and something of a hippie, and Dewey are both school and society dropouts Working at the same hospital they fall into a love affair, although Yvette finally rejects Dewey

99 Zindel, Paul *My Darling, My Homburger* New York Harper, 1969 Sean and Liz love each other until Liz becomes pregnant and she discovers that real love implies more than sex it implies responsibility

100 Zindel, Paul *The Pigmon* New York Harper, 1968 John and Lorraine, two lonely and alienated high school students, meet Mr Pignati, who gives them what they have never had before from adults love and respect In return and quite accidentally, they cause Mr Pignati's death

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# Appendix B

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## ONE HUNDRED SHORT FILMS FOR ENGLISH CLASSES

1 *A*, 10 minutes, black and white, Contemporary Films In this line-drawing, animated film, a man enters his simple room, and very soon a large capital "A" appears Attempting vainly first to remove and then to destroy the "A," the man is defeated, lies on the floor, and then discovers that "A" is gone He rejoices until he finds that a large capital "B" has replaced "A," and he realizes the procession of the alphabet will go on forever The film could be used to discuss the power of language over man or used as an example of absurdist comedy

2 *An Adventure With a Naked Boy*, 24 minutes, black and white Contemporary Films This is a Czech film set in a Prague tram A man leads a nine- or ten-year old naked boy to a seat, and the other passengers at first seem sympathetic but rapidly divide into two camps, those approving and those horrified Before the film is over, the film maker makes several comments about man's conformity or his ability to make mountains out of molehills

3 *After the First*, 14 minutes, color, Franciscan Communications Center A father gives his twelve year old son two birthday presents a shotgun and his first hunting trip The son watches his father kill one rabbit, the son makes his first killing and the boy grows up walking off from his father's last words "I felt that way once You'll see After the first time it gets easier"

4 *Alf Bill and Fred*, 8 minutes, color, Contemporary Films Bill's uncle dies and leaves Bill a fortune Leaving his friends, Alf, a duck and Fred, a dog, behind, Bill goes off in an unsuccessful search for money-based happiness This is a pleasant spoof of tales with easy morals and a satire on search for happiness films

5 *American Time Capsule*, 3 minutes, color, Pyramid Films Charles Braverman uses still pictures to condense the history of the United States into a film bordering on a psychedelic experience. It is useful with students beginning film-making or for teaching the idea of condensing or highlighting.

6 *Ares Contre Atlos*, 7½ minutes, color, Macmillan Films. This film consisting of five sight gags about the stupidity and horror of war, lies somewhere between a Roadrunner cartoon and a film of terror. It could be used to teach the idea of black comedy or man's inhumanity to man.

7 *Ark*, 20 minutes, color, Arthur Barr Productions. A modern Noah collects animals and flowers, saving them from a polluted world and taking them to a controlled environment. First rats invade his sanctuary, and when man enters he and his safe world are doomed. The film could be used to teach the idea of metaphor, or it could be used as a lesson in ecology.

8 *Automania 2000*, 10 minutes, color, Contemporary Films. This English-made cartoon satirizes mankind's love of automobiles and suggests that cars are likely to overwhelm the earth. The film would serve well as an introduction to satire or humor.

9 *Ballet Adagio*, 10 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. This is Norman McLaren's paean to ballet with the music of Albinoni underscoring the grace of the slow motion shots. Ballet may not be one of the usual enthusiasms of most students, but the grace and film-making techniques might be useful in relating it to other art forms.

10 *Basic Film Terms*, 15 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. This is a visual dictionary of the film, using a young man making his first film, his planning and his shooting. For any student interested in film-making or film viewing, this brief film will give him a tremendous amount of information interestingly presented.

11 *Because, That's Why*, 17 minutes, black and white, Film Images. Two junior executives in a cliché-ridden business world go on a weekend hunting trip. With no game in sight and thoroughly bored, they spot an out-of-control car and begin firing shot after shot at it. Finally, they pose beside their game as the car is hoisted like some sailfish trophy into the air by a wrecker. It's a parody of hunting and the business world and the pointlessness of many men's lives today.

12 *Blake*, 19 minutes, color, Contemporary Films. This movie presents a biographical slice of the life of Blake James, a young Canadian nonconformist. His indifference to the life he is supposed to lead might be compared with Thoreau's life and writings. The film might intrigue young people doubtful that anyone today can really do pretty much as he wishes.

13 *Blaze Glory*, 10 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. Heroic Blaze

Glory, symbol of all that is true and noble and good and dressed in white, rescues victims from a stage boldup, rescues a fair maiden in distress, and generally rescues anyone from anything remotely evil. Covering as it does virtually every stereotype of western films, *Blaze of Glory* could be used to discuss stereotypes in any kind of fiction.

14 *A Chairy Tale*, 10 minutes, black and white, Contemporary Films. This is a Norman McLaren parable about a chair which refuses to be used in the normal manner. The conflict between chair and man develops from the early refusal of the chair to be used, to the ultimate wheedling of the chair by the man. This seemingly simple film could be used to discuss the ways man uses things or people, or to discuss communication gaps between people.

15 *The Chicken*, 15 minutes, black and white, Contemporary Films. A small boy befriends the chicken his father had purchased as a future Sunday dinner. Almost anyone, elementary students through high school, would like the humor and warmth of the family. The movie could be used to teach point of view, humor, the structure of fiction, or cultural differences.

16 *Clouds*, 3 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. Claude's mother constantly questions her young son, "Claude, can't you do anything?" and his father just as constantly observes "You'll never amount to anything." So Claude invents a machine, presses a button and his nagging parents disappear. It's a funny, nasty little film which might spark discussion about the generation gap or parents' expectations.

17 *Concrete Poetry*, 12 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. Eight concrete poems demonstrate that poetry is a matter of typography as well as words. The film might introduce students to a realm of poetry they never suspected before. Indeed, it might enliven any class presently in a literary rut.

18 *The Cow*, 11 minutes, color, Churchill Films. A little girl joins some cattle in a pasture and is content to sit there watching the cows. This simple and visually stunning film could lead to descriptive writing. Although probably originally made for elementary students, the film almost forces viewers to look at simple things more carefully than most viewers usually do.

19 *The Critic*, 4 minutes, color, Learning Corporation of America. As blobs of color are flashed on the screen, a narrator (the critic) comments upon everything he sees as though he were seeing a foreign art film. As "a seventy-one-year-old man who is about to die" and who has a right, he maintains, to be as loud as he wants, the critic makes a sham of all impressionistic criticism and makes apparent that most of us see precisely what we want to see and little more.

20 *The Down Horse*, 18 minutes, color, Stanton Films. This is a moving account of the interrelationship between nature and the American Indian. Quietly narrated by Jay Silverbeels, the film combines

pictures with Indian legends and dances and symbols. Obviously, the film could be used for minority or ethnic literature classes, but it is rich enough to be useful in many other ways.

21. *Dream of Wild Horses*, 9 minutes, color, Contemporary Films. Wild horses of the Camargue area in France are filmed against an almost surrealistic background of fire and sea and sand and mud. This near-classic among short films could be used in many phases of composition teaching, just as it could be used in connection with symbolism or mood literature.

22. *The Electric Flag*, 12 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. Scenes from the movie *The Candidate* are used to comment on the impact of media on elections and politics today. This film is a valuable stimulus to discussions of the nature and power of media generally and television particularly.

23. *The End of One*, 7 minutes, color, Learning Corporation of America. After panning a flock of seagulls noisily eating at a dump, the film turns to one lonely gull walking, then staggering and falling, and finally dying. The film appeals to students, and it could spark discussion in many areas including loneliness, alienation, or death.

24. *Enter Hamlet*, 4 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. As the "To be or not to be" soliloquy is spoken by Maurice Evans, a picture flashes for every word uttered, creating a rapid series of visual puns. Although it could be used strictly for fun for students who have read *Hamlet*, anyone who is interested in word play would enjoy the film. A warning—the film needs to be shown at least twice.

25. *Experiments in Motion Graphics*, 13 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. This is a fascinating filmed lecture by John Whitney about his computer-made films, ending with Whitney commenting on a complete short film, *Permutotions*. Students interested in film-making or anyone intrigued by computers and their use in creating art forms would enjoy this.

26. *The Eye of the Beholder*, 25 minutes, black and white, Stuart Reynolds Productions. The viewer sees five different people's perception of Michael Gerard, an artist who apparently killed his model. A taxicab driver sees Gerard as a hood, a waiter sees Gerard as a woman chaser, Gerard's mother sees him as a good boy, his landlord sees him as a lunatic, and his cleaning lady sees him as a highly suspicious character. Part II allows us to see the truth, or at least what we think is the truth. Made in the late 1940s, the film might seem dated, but students respond to it very well.

27. *The Fat and the Lean*, 15 minutes, black and white, Pyramid Films. This is Roman Polanski's parable of an oppressed young man made happier by being granted some apparent freedom. The Brecht-like tale will likely interest more mature students aware of contemporary problems in slavery and freedom.

28 *The Father*, 28 minutes black and white New Line Cinema This is Mark Fine's modernized version of Chekhov's short story "Grief" Burgess Meredith plays the Central Park cabdriver desperate to tell someone, anyone about the death of his son

29 *1501½*, 8 minutes, color, Contemporary Films *1501½* is a bathroom in a large apartment house, the mistake of some architect who designed the bathroom without any accompanying rooms The renter who sleeps in the bathtub is besieged by his landlady with questions and accusations about his keeping a coffee pot in his room and about the young ladies she claims visit him It's satire comedy of the absurd, or a statement about life today

30 *Film Art of the Impossible*, 26 minutes, color, Learning Corporation of America Michael Ritchie, director of *Downhill Racer*, uses clips from that film and *Lawrence of Arabia*, *King Kong*, *Potemkin*, *Little Big Man*, *Birth of a Nation*, and *The African Queen* to explain the nature of film and to establish film as a unique art form rather than some variation of literature It provides a good introduction for students first studying film

31 *The Flot*, 15 minutes, black and white, Contemporary Films A young man is confined arbitrarily and inexplicably in a small room where he meets frustration after frustration in every one of his activities, from eating to vainly trying to escape Students studying Kafka or Ionesco would be fascinated Other students would likely be overwhelmed or confused

32 *Frome by Frome*, 13 minutes, color Pyramid Films Aptly titled, the film is about animation techniques and making animated films This is one of those rarities, an instructional film both teachers and students will like and learn from

33. *Future Shock*, 42 minutes, color, Contemporary Films Narrated by Orson Welles this film describes and analyzes the stress and disorientation of man subjected to too much change in too short a time

34 *Gollery*, 6 minutes, color, Pyramid Films This is Ken Rudolph's history of art, with 2 000 paintings and etchings flashed at the audience with unbelievable speed, clarity, and beauty The seventeenth and eighteenth century music is an integral part of the film, for both music and art complement each other

35 *Genesis*, 6 minutes color, Macmillan Films This cynical film most likely useful with sophisticated and mature students, is an animated tale of the creation of a man from the body being stamped by a machine, on through an assembly line production of his head and heart and clothes to the final shot of his head being deftly removed by a guillotine

36 *Genius Man*, 1½ minutes, color, ACI Films One caveman presents a series of inventions to his fellows In turn they reject his

wheel, his clock, his phonograph, and his television set Only when he invents the club and demonstrates its use do they approve

37 *Geronimo Jones*, 21 minutes, color, Learning Corporation of America A young Indian boy discovers what it is to be an Indian in a white world as a red-neck storekeeper fleeces him out of a prized possession

38 *Gloss*, 11 minutes, color, Contemporary Films Through shots of artisans handcrafting glass objects and shots of an assembly line production of glass bottles, the film-maker draws a contrast between artistry and mechanization

39 *The Hand*, 19 minutes, color, Contemporary Films A puppet film about an artisan pot-maker and an oppressive and dictatorial hand who insists that the artisan make statues celebrating the hand and the state becomes a good introduction to the technique of symbolism and the idea of freedom

40 *The Hangman*, 12 minutes, color, Contemporary Films This dramatization of Maurice Ogden's narrative poem about the appearance of a hangman in a small town and his consequent business demonstrates the apathy of too many people about justice and injustice

41 *Help! My Snowman's Burning Down*, 10 minutes, color, Contemporary Films A well-dressed man sitting fully clothed in a bathtub opens a door into a bar where he is shocked by the overtures of a scantily clad young lady He finally floats out to sea in his bathtub, only to be sunk by a torpedo fired by a toy submarine One of the most popular short films of the absurd, it will appeal almost entirely to sophisticated students

42 *The House*, 32 minutes, black and white, Contemporary Films As the viewer watches an old house being demolished, he also catches glimpses of the lives and hopes and loves of two generations who have lived there The film demands a mature audience who can work to create reality out of the fractured narrative, but if the audience may be at first mystified students will grow to respect and like both the film and its techniques

43 *Hypothese Beta*, 7 minutes, color, Contemporary Films This allegorical film about a computer card with one personified punch-hole at the extreme bottom right drives home a message about man and his control or lack of control over technology

44 *I'm o Man*, 20 minutes, black and white and color, Contemporary Films A black militant courts police arrest and personal harassment as the price he must pay to win freedom for himself, his people, and his two sons

45 *Insomnio*, 17 minutes, color, International Film Bureau In this satire on horror stories a man reads a tale of terror in an effort to get



to sleep, and the pages come alive presenting most of the cliches of horror films

46 *A Journey*, 12 minutes color, Wombat Productions Seven people ride on a railroad car bound for someplace, and one by one, the passengers disappear in this metaphor of each man's travel through life

47 *Love Me, Love Me, Love Me*, 8 minutes, color, Contemporary Films This is a fable about two men a man who can do absolutely nothing right but is loved by everyone and a man who does everything right but who is loved by no one except his stuffed alligator, Charlie

48 *Mochine*, 10 minutes, color, Pyramid Films This history of the development of machines from benevolent helper to oppressive master, presented in the form of a fable, is chilling and all too possible

49 *The Making of a Live TV Show*, 26 minutes, color Pyramid Films The production from start to finish of the Twenty Third Annual Emmy Awards show is presented establishing the tremendous amount of work behind any large scale production

50 *Matrix*, 6 minutes, color, Pyramid Films This film employs motion graphics produced by IBM computers with squares and cubes dancing before the viewers

51 *A Matter of Survival*, 26 minutes, color Contemporary Films Computerization comes to the accounting branch of a large company and the head of accounting is assured over and over that this change will cause him and his workers no personal problems The assurances turn out to be empty and futile gestures

62 *Modern Sports Coaching* 7 minutes color Contemporary Films This animated cartoon pokes fun at the win at all costs athletic coach

53 *The Moods of Surfing* 15 minutes color Pyramid Films The humor, excitement, grace, and many moods of surfers along California's and Hawaii's beaches are shown with a musical score neatly complementing the action

54 *Munro*, 9 minutes color Rembrandt Film Library A four year-old boy is accidentally drafted into the army and vainly tries to get out in this delightful and nasty satire

55 *Nahanni*, 18 minutes color Contemporary Films Albert Faile age 73 has seven times tried to reach the rumored gold at the headwaters of the Nahanni River in Canada This film records Faile's eighth effort

56 *Naming of Ports* 5 minutes black and white Contemporary Films This is an effective filmed version of Henry Reed's poem contrasting a recital of the parts of a gun with the thoughts of nature of one of the gun owner's listeners

57 *Neighbors* 9 minutes color Contemporary Films Two men

neighbors, find a lovely flower growing on their boundary line. Each wishes exclusive possession of the flower, and they fight to the death in this parable of man and his needs.

58. *Night and Fog*, 31 minutes, black and white and color, Contemporary Films. An apparently simple, nonsensationalized, underdramatized contrast between black and white footage of the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp during World War II and color shots of the area today quietly underscores the ability of man to hurt his brothers.

59. *The North American Indian: Treaties Made, Treaties Broken*, 18 minutes, color, Contemporary Films. This film is an exposé of the shabby treatment accorded Indians in the state of Washington, particularly with regard to fishing rights.

60. *The North American Indian: How the West Was Won . . . and Honor Lost*, 25 minutes, color, Contemporary Films. This second film in the series gives an historical account of the American Indians from their first encounter with the white man up to their defeat at Wounded Knee.

61. *The North American Indian: Lament of the Reservation*, 24 minutes, color, Contemporary Films. The final film in the series shows what has happened to the Indians in the reservation system, focusing on their desolation and degradation.

62. *N.Y., N.Y.*, 16 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. This film portrays the life of New York City from dawn to night, using many film techniques to emphasize the hustle and bustle of the big city world.

63. *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, 27 minutes, black and white, Contemporary Films. This is a brilliant filmed version of the Ambrose Bierce short story about the hanging of a Civil War spy.

64. *Omega*, 13 minutes, color, Pyramid Films. A multitude of colors bathe the viewer as he watches shapes and objects and columns and sunrises in an ambiguous and psychedelic film.

65. *Pos de Deux*, 14 minutes, black and white, Pyramid Films. This is another Norman McLaren paean to the beauty, grace, and warmth of ballet, showing single and multiple images of two dancers appearing, mixing, separating, and mixing again.

66. *People Soup*, 13 minutes, color, Learning Corporation of America. Two young boys use their imaginations and several ingredients from the kitchen to make a magic concoction which turns one into a chicken and the other into a large dog.

67. *The Question*, 10 minutes, color, Contemporary Films. A "?" falls near a little man, and he goes to a religious figure, a politician, an artist, a financial expert, a scientist, a psychiatrist, and a military figure to discover its meaning. Finding no satisfactory answer, he meets a lady in the park and discovers love.

68. *Rail*, 13 minutes, color, ACI Films. This is an English-made

film showing the viewer many different railroad trains in a visually stunning description of trains and speed

69 *The Red Balloon*, 34 minutes color, Macmillan Films A widely used, almost classic, film about a young French boy, his red balloon and his love for and loyalty to the balloon and its love for him

70 *Reflections* 15 minutes color, Contemporary Films This is a bittersweet love story set in the New York ghetto concerning an awkward and shy Chinese boy and an attractive Puerto Rican girl

71 *Replay*, 8 minutes color Contemporary Films This gentle happy, and loving satire about the generation gap asks if there really is a generation gap today that has not always existed in the minds of some young people and some adults

72 *The Rise and Fall of the Great Lakes* 17 minutes color Pyramid Films This humorous and painless lesson on geology and ecology shows the birth of the Great Lakes and man's incredible ability to pollute and destroy them

73 *River Boy*, 17 minutes, color, Contemporary Films A young boy living an easy-going life along a bayou finds a kind of first love and with the love an initiation into the pain of growing up

74 *Rodeo* 20 minutes, color, Contemporary Films Rodeo presents a kaleidoscopic series of images of the rodeo and its clowns band contestants and animals It also shows Larry Mahon preparing to ride a Brahma bull and as we watch a ballet of colors and anguish in slow motion, his fall from it

75 *The Season* 15 minutes color, Contemporary Films This is a satire on what Christmas has become banal parades a Christmas tree salesman eager to sell his black or red flocked trees and an agency that handles Santa Clauses for shopping centers or homes

76 *The Shooting Gallery*, 6 minutes color SIM Productions In the shooting gallery, a rouge cheeked wooden looking soldier fires at various targets and sets flat characters into their prescribed actions Finally, he fires at a dancing couple the first three dimensional characters we have seen and the couple break loose their bonds only to be flattened out by the soldier This film gives an easy introduction to symbolism

77 *Six Filmmakers in Search of a Wedding* 12 minutes color Pyramid Films A wedding is filmed by six film makers each using a particular point of view and technique This film gives students an excellent idea of the different ways any subject can be viewed

78 *Skater Dozer*, 18 minutes color, Pyramid Films A lively gang of boys, all adept on skateboards suddenly discover their gang breaking up as adolescence strikes and girls enter their lives

79 *Sky Above* 9 minutes color Pyramid Films This film depicts a young boy who wanders around the impoverished area of the city

thinking of the wonders of nature in the forest and mountains and along the seashore

80 Solo, 15 minutes, color, Pyramid Films A mountain climber climbing alone in the Sierra Nevadas shows the viewer the exuberance, loneliness and acrophobia of the sport

81 Song of the Prairie, 18 minutes, color, Rembrandt Film Library A Czechoslovakian puppet film wraps up nearly all the clichés of Western movies the fainting ingenue, the faithful and sharp shooting hero the swarthy villain, the grizzled stagecoach drivers, and the hero's incredibly loyal and intelligent horse

82 Starlight, 5 minutes, black and white and color, Pyramid Films Beginning with fast cuts of the hurried and harried life of the city, Bob Fulton's film cuts to shots of a Tibetan wise man, a man living alone, and then to a series of rapid shots of nature A highly personal film, Starlight is ambiguous and apparently confused, but students often enjoy working out some meanings for it

83 Stor-Spangled Bonner, 5 minutes, color, Pyramid Films A soldier walks through a jungle, steps on a mine, and dies slowly and graphically in slow motion as the "Grass Roots" sing a funereal version of the national anthem

84 The String Bean, 17 minutes, black and white and color, Contemporary Films An old and lonely French woman finds life and purpose in growing a string bean

85 Syrinx, 3 minutes, black and white, Learning Corporation of America This is a hauntingly beautiful film of the Greek legend of the nymph pursued by Pan Debussy's music accompanies its charcoal drawings On the same reel is the film Cityscope

86 Tho's Me, 15 minutes, black and white, Contemporary Films A social worker tries to talk a young Puerto Rican school drop out into rejoining the academic world The social worker has all the right questions, but the drop out has some highly unconventional answers

87 Third Ave El, 11 minutes, color, ACI Films The viewer gains a panoramic picture of the sights and sounds and smells of New York City as he watches passengers on the Third Avenue El

88 Threshold, 25 minutes, color Pyramid Films A young man is pursued and finally killed by a lawman for reasons never quite clear Between the fatal shot and his death, the young man is granted time to spend with a lovely young girl This film is highly symbolic and equally highly ambiguous

89 Time Piece 10 minutes color Contemporary Films A comedy of the absurd, Time Piece examines man's obsession with conformity, eating and sex, but most of all with clocks, the passing of time, and his fear of both living and dying

90 Tomorrow Again, 16 minutes black and white, Pyramid Films Grace an elderly woman living in a dreary rooming house for

old people dons a fur stole and dreams of going to the lobby to be admired. Her real visit downstairs leaves her lonely and more desolate than before.

01 **The Top** 8 minutes color Contemporary Films An animated satire on man's struggle for success, money, and power; this film shows several people trying to get to the top, though it is never clear what the top means.

92 **Toys** 8 minutes color Contemporary Films This is a Film Board of Canada release showing a group of children watching war toys, toys which temporarily come alive, killing or maiming each other. Its antiwar statement is powerful.

93 **21-87** 10 minutes black and white Contemporary Films This Arthur Lipsett film about life and death is mostly about man's inability or unwillingness to learn his own identity or the identity of others.

94 **Two** 9 minutes color Macmillan Films This satire of Italian film makers, especially Antonioni and Fellini, shows two people on the beach looking at each other's souls introspectively.

95 **Two Men and a Wardrobe** 15 minutes black and white Contemporary Films This is an early Roman Polanski morality tale of two men emerging from the sea carrying a wardrobe chest. Rejected by other men and appalled by the sins of mankind, the two men return to the sea.

96 **The Violinist** 7 minutes color Learning Corporation of America Ernest Pintoff and Carl Reiner combine to tell the story of Harry, a nice person but a lousy violinist who longs to play beautifully.

97 **The Violin Lesson** 10 minutes color Contemporary Films A stereotyped violin teacher has a stereotyped young violin student. As they begin their lesson, they produce cacophony. Although the film seems predictable, a legitimate but tricky ending changes its import.

98 **The Wall** 4 minutes color Contemporary Films Two men encounter an apparently insurmountable wall. One waits while the other tries vainly to scale it and finally blasts through. The people-user character walks through the hole, meets another wall, and sits waiting for another person to come along to be used.

99 **Whose Garden Was This?** 3 minutes color Contemporary Films As the song "Whose Garden Was This?" is heard on the soundtrack, the viewer watches a little boy riding his tricycle past stagnant water and filthy streets.

100 **Why Man Creates** 25 minutes color Pyramid Films Saul Bass's Academy Award-winning film might have been as easily called "Why Does Man Create?" for the several parts of the film take up man's incredible creative processes through history. By now almost a classic short film, it is so rich in ideas and film techniques that it is usable in myriad ways by almost any teacher at any level of teaching.

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# Appendix C

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## EIGHTEEN THEMATIC UNIT IDEAS

A thematic unit is a series of lessons, activities, readings and assignments which focuses attention and inquiry on a particular issue, concern, or topic. Such units normally combine whole-class activities to initiate the unit with small-group and individual work once the unit is under way. Although in English classes most thematic units are built primarily around literature, they need not be, and several of the units proposed here could be based on a variety of sources, including contemporary nonfiction, socio economic or scientific data, non-print media, and materials from the popular culture (See Chapter 3, pages 61-62, and Chapter 6 pages 180-183 for additional discussion of the structure and use of thematic units.)

Teachers may originate thematic units, or they may develop from students' interest in a particular problem such as ecology, racism, growing up, or drugs. They may have their genesis in a literature anthology section such as man against himself, conformity and individualism, or humor, in an interesting article in a professional journal such as *Media & Methods'* multi-media units on the automobile (April 1972), mythology today (April 1973), and "self" (October 1973), or in a particular literary selection or feature film. *Antigone*, for instance, raises the issue of citizenship and conscience, and the film *A Thousand Clowns* suggests consideration of freedom and responsibility.

Although there are many commercial thematic units available, covering both print and multi-media topics, the best units are often those that the teacher creates for and with his own students. The suggestions which follow are examples of units which a teacher could develop on his own. All of these units have strong psychological or sociological emphases, are related to major concerns of many of today's adolescents, use a wide range of materials and can be

dealt with at varying levels of sophistication by seventh through twelfth graders. These units may be combined and related in a number of ways ("Women in America" might be combined with "Identity", "Utopias and Negative Utopias" with "The Good Life"), but they are roughly grouped here according to personal perspectives (Units 1-5), anthropological perspectives (Units 6-10), social perspectives (Units 11-16), and future perspectives (Units 17-18)

## 1 IDENTITY—THE SEARCH FOR SELF WHO AM I?

Through the study of appropriate literature and film, dramatic improvisation, discussion, and writing students focus attention and inquiry on identity formation their own and others. In fiction they develop answers to such questions as why characters behave as they do, how they came to be the way they are, and what influenced them. Autobiographical writing, speculation about one's future, and slides or collages designed to express "the real me" are all activities appropriate to the unit. Linguistic inquiry could focus on the way one's language, oral and silent, creates impressions on others. Students might consider the part which schools, the popular media, and socioeconomic circumstances play in shaping their identity and determining the roles they play in different situations. Literature appropriate to the study of identity formation and crises is virtually inexhaustible, including classics like Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, more contemporary works such as Carson McCullers' *Member of the Wedding*, William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker*, Jessamyn West's *Gress Delahanty*, Robert McKay's *Dave's Song*, and biographies and autobiographies such as Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* or *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. More mature students may do some reading in the psychology of identity formation. Bernard C. Hollister's *Self?*<sup>1</sup> provides a wealth of references, both in film and print. In an approach based on the work of psychologist Erik Erikson, he examines identity formation and the culture's role in shaping attitudes toward appearance, sexual roles, choices of occupation and deviance.

## 2 PERSONAL VALUES WHAT DO I REALLY BELIEVE?

From Plato's *Dialogues* through Hesse's *Siddhartha* to films like *A Thousand Clowns* and *A Man for All Seasons*, artists have expressed man's search for personal values. Such varied works as

Thoreau's *Walden*, B. F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (Chapter 6, "Values") Zindel's *The Pigmon*, Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, and James Dickey's *Deliverance* confront students with conflicting value systems to consider and discuss. In Mildred Lawrence's novel *Wolk o' Rocky Road*, an Appalachian girl is caught in conflict between the traditional values of her community and those of the townspeople she meets at school.

The closely related theme of "Success and failure—What do they mean?" can also be examined in a wide variety of literature, including John Updike's novels and poetry and Kathleen M. Peyton's adolescent novel *Pennington's Last Term*. A series of provocative exercises to help students recognize and examine their own values is suggested in two very practical articles. Michael Mears's "Who's Sid Simon and What's All This about Values Clarification?" contains several exercises for use in the classroom, as does Howard Kirschenbaum and Sidney B. Simon's "Teaching English with a Focus on Values."<sup>2</sup> The main device used in this second article is a "values sheet," a ditto containing a provocative, value-laden statement or situation and a series of questions to help students clarify their thinking about the problem, for instance, deciding which of five patients should receive a heart transplant. Jeffrey Schrank's *Media in Value Education: A Critical Guide*<sup>4</sup> lists and summarizes nearly 100 films for use in classroom value clarification and suggests questions for discussion of them.

### 3 MORAL DILEMMAS: WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

Should you obey the law even if it means going against your conscience? Are mercy killings or abortions ever justified? Moral dilemmas are of course, found throughout literature and film as well as in real life. *Antigone*, films like *High Noon* and *A Man for All Seasons*, and landmark decisions such as whether to drop the atomic bomb on Japan are all possible subjects of inquiry in this unit. There is, however, a natural tendency to raise such inquiry to abstract and historical levels and to ignore today's issues and the very real dilemmas students face in their own lives, such as having to choose the lesser of two evils. In Charles Crawford's *Bod Foll* for instance, fifteen year old Sean Richardson must choose between his conscience and his new friend Wade Sabbat, and the choice is difficult. A number of films and novels can be used to bring home the question of

2 *Media & Methods* 9 (Mar. 1973) 30-37

3 *English Journal* 58 (Oct. 1969) 1071-76

4 (Chicago: Argus, 1970)



moral responsibility to students including the films *Phoebe and The Hongman* Learning Corporation of America's *My Country Right or Wrong* Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox Bow Incident* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

#### 4 GROWING UP—COMING OF AGE WHAT DOES GROWN UP MEAN?

Rites of passage and initiation themes have been popular in fiction and films *Romeo and Juliet* *Great Expectations* *Huckleberry Finn* *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* *Johnny Tremain* *The Yearling* and *A Separate Peace* are but a few of the works commonly studied in school all of which deal with young people's struggles to achieve adulthood Although good readers can enjoy Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* or Conrad's *The Secret Sharer* and most can manage *Catcher in the Rye* or a great number of appropriate junior novels even non readers can enjoy short films such as *Skater Dater* and *After the First* and feature films such as *Walkabout* *Summer of '42* *Red Sky at Morning* and *American Graffiti*

Students could enter this unit in a number of ways perhaps first examining customs and rituals of primitive people and then finding analogues in their own culture Discussions and writing assignments could focus on such topics as the meaning of maturity comparisons of mature and immature behavior dating rituals the place of the automobile in American coming of age rites and the image of adolescence in popular media The generation gap a related theme for older students might be explored through films such as *Contemporary*/McGraw Hill's *Replay* which draws comparisons between the early 1970s and the 1920s For additional references Joan Young and Frank McLaughlin's *Growing Media Experiences to Illuminate It* includes an annotated list of ten appropriate paperbacks five films and a study guide for the film *Saturday Morning*

#### 5 THE GOOD LIFE WHAT IS IT?

What is the good life? How are our notions of it formed? What part do schools and the mass media play? How do our views of the good life compare to others views? An endless supply of literary works can be studied from the perspective of this theme W H Auden's poem *The Unknown Citizen* might be used first followed by a display of advertising Simon and Garfunkel's recording of *The Big Bright Green Pleasure Machine* photographs from *The*

Family of Man, the song "All I Want Is a Room Somewhere" from *My Fair Lady*, a dittoed page of quotations from philosophers of different times, or students' own ideas on the topic. The impact of media and advertising are related linguistic concerns. Student assignments might include conducting a poll, researching the good life in philosophical writings, writing satires or song lyrics, or producing slide presentations, films, or collages with the title "The Good Life." Literature might include such works as Hesse's *Siddhortho*, Albee's *The American Dream*, Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* or *Main Street*, selections from Wolden or Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, and articles by contemporary popular philosophers and journalists. The literature on utopias (cited in Unit 18) could also be used here. Contemporary/McGraw-Hill's film *Multiple Mon* (an 18-minute examination of contrasts and similarities in cultural patterns) would be appropriate for such a unit, as would Pyramid Films' one minute *The Great Society*, which focuses on American materialism, and Contemporary Films' *Help! My Snowman's Burning Down*, a 10 minute surrealist satire of the ad-man's view of the world.

## 6 HUMAN NATURE IS MAN GOOD OR EVIL? A NAKED APE OR A WORK OF ART?

The Center for Humanities, Inc.\* has produced an effective multimedia presentation, *An Inquiry into the Nature of Man: His Inhumanity and His Humanity*, which could serve to introduce and sustain this unit. Its slides of great art work and its photographs are very good and could be used in a variety of ways to stimulate writing, discussion, inquiry, and student projects. For older students, Alain Resnais's film *Night and Fog* (Contemporary/McGraw Hill), a chilling reminder of the Nazi death camps, might be an effective beginning. As with the moral dilemmas unit, however, the best work with this theme will probably result from students' recognition of their own part in the human condition. Virtually all of literature can be studied from the perspective of this theme, but it is perhaps most applicable to the following works usually available in secondary schools: Shakespeare's tragedies, Ibsen's and Shaw's dramas, Pope's *Essay on Man*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Wilder's *Our Town*, Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, the works of Hamlin Garland and Frank Norris, Whitman's poetry, and—in a lighter vein—Gore Vidal's *A Visit to a Small Planet*.

## 7 HEROES WHAT ARE THEY AND CAN I BE LIKE THEM?

Many junior high school literature anthologies feature units on courage, and John F Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* continues to be popular reading for many adolescents. Among the topics which a teacher might pursue are a study of student heroes and their notions of heroism, media's role in creating contemporary heroes,<sup>7</sup> the distinction between courage and bravado and the notion of the antihero. Two selections which might stimulate older students' reactions to the topic are Chapter 3 of B F Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* which questions the whole concept of heroism and Arthur M Schlesinger's essay *The Decline of Heroes*<sup>8</sup> which questions the contemporary nonheroic view of many historians. Mythical and folk heroes, personal and moral heroism (as in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* or the film *A Man for All Seasons*), western heroes (nicely parodied in Pyramid Films' *Bloze Glory*), and war heroes are usually well represented in secondary school literature anthologies and paperback collections, as well as in popular feature films and television programs. Biographies should also be part of the reading list for this unit and may be important to the adolescent looking for someone to emulate. Writing assignments in this unit could range from philosophical essays to accounts of heroism in students' everyday life.

## 8 MAN AND NATURE WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP?

Virtually every junior high school literature series includes at least one such unit, usually quite unpopular with the boys featuring many romantic nature poems and London's *To Build a Fire*. The adventurous side of the man and nature unit can usually spark some interest using such works as Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon Tiki*, Dickey's *Deliverance*, and Pyramid Films' excellent mountain climbing adventure, *Solo*. Contemporary interest in ecology suggests still another approach geared more to inquiry than to excitement. Perhaps in conjunction with work in science or social studies students can gather information, write reports, do creative writing, write letters to the editor or articles for the school paper, conduct interviews and work with photographs or movies. Even the romantic approach to nature might be improved through use of such short films as *Sky Ski*, the *Outer Limits* and *Moods of Surfing*.

<sup>7</sup> See Jeffrey Schrank's *Mythology Today* Media & Methods 9 (Apr 1973) 22-40.

<sup>8</sup> In Richard Thruelsen and John Kobler eds., *Adventures of the Mind* (New York: Knopf 1960).

## 9 REBEL-VICTIMS DO THEY GET WHAT THEY DESERVE?

Despite Americans' traditional regard for the rugged, moral individual who will stand alone against the elements and the mob, most people dislike the rebel in their midst. It may be interesting and enlightening for students to contemplate the paradox that despite our regard for the individual, most of us, most of the time, are part of the mob. A unit on this topic<sup>9</sup> might be introduced with a discussion of the points cited above or through the related topics of alienation and protest. Who is a rebel? Can we generalize about the kinds of people who become rebels (don't forget the Founding Fathers)? Why do people engage in protests? Why do these people so often anger others? (Consider Thomas Powers's *Dionio: The Making of a Terrorist*.) How do we personally react to protesters and rebels? Why are rebels so often victimized? Who are the rebels in our society, our community, our school? Among the vast body of material applicable to such a unit are *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Don Quixote* (and the musical version *Man of La Mancha*), *Huckleberry Finn*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *Grapes of Wrath*, John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and Luther, Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, Robert McKay's junior novel *The Trouble Maker*, and S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Langston Hughes's poetry and Wallace Steven's "Disillusionment at 10 O'clock", and such feature films as *Easy Rider*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *A Man for All Seasons*, and *The Graduate*.

## 10 OUTSIDERS WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT, AND HOW DO THEY FEEL ABOUT IT?

What is the 'in' crowd? Why do people 'drop out'? Have you ever been in the position of being an 'outsider'? How did you feel? Could you write a journal entry from an outsider's point of view? How do 'insiders' look on 'outsiders'? Could you create an improvised scene around this theme? Questions and activities such as these might be used to introduce this unit which could include such further activities as compiling definitions of loneliness, writing short stories using the insider-outsider conflict, and finding ways to express the outsider's view through poetry, film, and photographs. Literature used in the unit could include such disparate works as *Huckleberry Finn*, *Catcher in the Rye*, Jack Shafer's *Shone*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and *Dharma Bums*, John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely*

<sup>9</sup> Suggested by Bonnie Jo Lundblad's "The Rebel Victim: Past and Present," *English Journal* 60 (Sept. 1971): 763-66.

Hunter Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*  
 S E Hinton's *The Outsiders* Gregory Armstrong's *Life at the Bottom*  
 and Vachel Lindsay's *The Leaden Eyed* Films could include *Phoebe*  
 and *No Reason to Stay*

## 11 EXAMINING THE CULTURE(S) WHAT ARE OUR SACRED COWS?

Three articles from *Media & Methods* would be particularly helpful to teachers developing this unit Bernard C Hollister's *The Martian Perspective* \* suggests helping students see themselves as an outsider might see them and suggests materials and activities to promote a detached examination of American norms rites of passage uses of space and time and nonverbal communication Jeffrey Schrank's *Mythology Today* \* examines contemporary mythology and myth formation in commercials and sports providing interesting background material and student inquiry activities as well as a bibliography and list of films Jeffrey Schrank's *Automobile* \* provides a hard look at the most sacred of American cows the automobile suggesting areas of inquiry student and class projects and an extensive list of films (For example Schrank suggests that students calculate the amount of space devoted to the needs of cars in their section of town roads driveways parking spaces garages gas stations dealerships parts stores and the like) Although such a unit may seem more appropriate for social studies than English and might well be done as a joint endeavor there are many interesting and useful language activities which could be used including the investigation of advertising reading contemporary nonfiction such as Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* examining cultural influences on language and our cultural symbolism—the car's value as a status symbol—and written or graphic work expressing aspects of the culture such as a collage or film depicting items to be included in a time capsule for the community or school As part of this unit students could be encouraged to investigate the various subcultures of the school and community and to find literary selections relating to these various groups

## 12 WOMEN IN AMERICA WHAT IS A SEXIST SOCIETY?

As with the previous unit reading here might include more nonfiction than fiction although students could be encouraged to look

10 *Media & Methods* 10 (Nov 1973) 26-29 56-65

11 *Media & Methods* 9 (Apr 1973) 22-40

12 *Media & Methods* 8 (Apr 1972) 20-28 53

at the sexism evident in much literature including fiction. There is a virtually endless supply of recent books and articles which can be used to stimulate discussion and inquiry, including several English Journal articles<sup>13</sup> and articles in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harpers*, *Ms*, *Saturday Review*, and *Psychology Today* (including the *Psychology Today* game, 'Man/Woman'). Students can examine sexism in children's toys, textbook illustrations, popular media, advertising literature, language, and—perhaps most important—in their own assumptions. Bernard Hollister's "Self?"<sup>14</sup> contains several useful references and activity ideas. Nancy Schwartz's "How Lovely to Be a Woman"<sup>15</sup> examines women's "coming of age" in four contemporary novels and Miriam Kotzin's "Women, Like Blacks and Orientals, Are All Different: A Resource Unit on Women"<sup>16</sup> is a very helpful guide to classroom activities and projects, books, organizations and films dealing with women's situation in contemporary society.

### 13. POWER: WHAT IS IT, AND WHO HAS IT?

Everyone agrees that too much power is bad, but can a person have too little power? Do you agree with Rollo May's statement that "Deeds of violence in our society are performed largely by those trying to establish their self esteem, to defend their self image, and to demonstrate that they, too, are significant?"<sup>17</sup> What does it mean to be powerless? Who are the powerful people in our society, our community, our school? These and similar questions might be used to stimulate student interest in this unit and activities might include writing from the point of view of the powerful or powerless, creating a tape essay or film on the theme of power, speculating on an individual's need for some power or society's attempts to control it, and consideration of the uses of power in such works as *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, Warren's *All the Kings Men*, Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, and Puzo's *The Godfather*. Since powerlessness is a frequent concern of many adolescents the unit should not focus solely on historical and social uses of power but should attempt to deal with questions of power, self-confidence and control of one's destiny on a personal level as well.

13 See Susan L. Wink, "The Sexual Bias of Textbook Literature" *English Journal* (Feb. 1973) 224-29.

14 *Media & Methods* 10 (Oct. 1973).

15 *Media & Methods* 9 (Apr. 1973) 44-50.

16 *Media & Methods* 8 (Mar. 1972) 18-26.

17 *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (New York: Norton, 1972) p. 23.

## 14 WAR IS THIS EVIL NECESSARY?

Perhaps less of an issue with adolescents since American withdrawal from Vietnam, the topic is still of great interest and importance. The initial problem may be to help students narrow the topic and focus on particular aspects of war, such as its causes, probable future, effects on combatants, noncombatants or the general society, and the moral issues it inevitably raises for young and old alike. An almost limitless supply of good short films is available on this topic, such as *Toys*, *The Sixties*, or Pyramid Films' *The Star Spangled Banner* (a five-minute analysis of the agonizing death of a soldier in the jungle, which provides an excellent companion to Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" or Randall Jarrell's "The Death of a Ball Turret Gunner"). *Reach for Glory* is a sensitive and moving British film examining war's effects on two adolescent boys and the roster of feature films dealing with war is almost endless. Literature dealing with the topic is also extensive, including many good junior novels and such adult fiction as Graves's *Goodbye to All That*, Remarque's still popular *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Trevor's *The Killing Ground*, Shaw's *The Young Lions*, Boulle's *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, and Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, the poetry of Owen, Dickey's "The Performance," Hecht's chilling "More Light! More Light!" and much of the protest poetry from the late 1960s. For ideas on student activities and approaches to the unit see Henry Davis Nadig Jr., "'War' in Literature and Film: A Guided Independent Project"<sup>18</sup> and Arthur Daigon's provocative description of a multi-media war unit in "English: A Three Ringed Circus."<sup>19</sup>

## 15 SOCIAL CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE: WHY DOES IT HAPPEN, AND HOW DO WE CHOOSE SIDES?

To what extent is American life or life in our community polarized into rich poor, black-white, young old, conservative liberal, white collar-blue collar factions? What are the sources of social unrest? Is social conflict inevitable? When is protest legitimate and when is it not? Is it true that violence is "as American as apple pie"? How much violence is there on television or in today's films? What part do the media, schools, prisons, and social conditions play in causing or reducing violence? When is violence justified? Although such questions may seem more appropriate for social studies than English, they do represent important human concerns which have been the subject of

18. *English Journal* 60 (Oct 1971) 906-08

19. *English Journal* 62 (Nov 1973) 1121-22

much literature and which can be used to engage students in a variety of language activities. Films from the late 1960's, the folk-rock music of social protest, or the Kerner Commission's Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders could be used to stimulate and aid students' inquiry into this topic, and a wide range of literature is also applicable, from Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* and Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* to such contemporary works as George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*, *The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, Martin Luther King's *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and Gregory Armstrong's two collections *Protest: Man Against Society* and *Life at the Bottom*. Many of the materials cited in the unit on rebel-victims are also applicable to this unit. Excellent sources of information and ideas for the teacher are Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr's *The History of Violence in America*, Rollo May's *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence*, and three articles in the October 1972 *Media & Methods*<sup>20</sup>: Paul Carneio "Violence: Real and Mediate", Bernard Hollister, "Violence: Activities and a Very Selective Bibliography", and Ralph Amelio, "Violence: Film-Study Unit."

## 16 POLITICS AND ELECTIONS: HOW DO THEY RUN?

Especially in a presidential election year, a unit on this subject, perhaps in conjunction with a social studies unit, should provide an opportunity to capitalize on considerable student interest, particularly now that eighteen year olds have the vote. Involvement in local or state elections offers many practical language oriented activities for young volunteers, and class activities could include debates, taking polls, discussing issues, interviewing candidates, writing letters to the editor or articles for the school paper, and evaluating campaign rhetoric and use of the media. There is a growing body of social-science fiction such as Drury's *Advise and Consent*, Warren's *All the Kings Men*, O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah*, and Wallace's *The Man* (all of which have been made into popular feature films), but the main readings for the unit, especially with older students, may be contemporary periodicals and the popular media or nonfiction works such as White's books on *The Making of the President* or Joe McGinness's study of media's role in national politics *The Selling of the President, 1968*. For additional suggestions see Anne LeClercq, "The Campaign Trail,"<sup>21</sup> an annotated list of appropriate films, filmstrips, and audio aids which will no doubt need updating before the next national election.

20 Pp. 65-77, 86-87.

21 *Media & Methods* 9 (Sept. 1972): 63-65.



## 17. FUTURING. WHERE DO WE GO FROM NOW?

"Education in the Future Tense," Chapter 18 of Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*, offers a number of suggestions which apply to English classes as well as those in social studies. Including the admonition that students should read science fiction writers like Arthur C. Clarke and Robert Heinlein "because they can lead young minds through an imaginative exploration of the jungle of political, social, psychological, and ethical issues that will confront these children as adults." As Aldous Huxley makes clear in *Brave New World Revisited*, writers' dreams and nightmares about the future have a way of becoming realities. A unit on futuring should encourage students to speculate about what the future may, or should, be like and how people may have to cope with it. What will be the personal human consequences in our town if population and pollution continue to increase? What moral issues are raised by the possibility of "test tube babies" or a genuinely effective system for controlling human behavior such as D. F. Skinner proposes in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*? How will life styles have to change if today's developing countries demand and get their "share" of the world's scarce resources and what problems would be created by a vastly extended human life span? Students can be encouraged to write "future histories," speculating on the shape of the world at the turn of the century (when many of them will still be in their thirties) or on the impact which predicted technology (two-way television in every home) or possible social changes (banning private cars in favor of public transportation) could have.

Despite the rather optimistic note of short films like *Omega* and feature films such as Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, most films and novels about the future are quite pessimistic, picturing worlds of overpopulation (James Ellis's *We All Die Naked*), holocaust (Mordcau Roshwald's *Level 7*, Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*), or post-holocaust horrors (John Wyndham's *Rebirth*, Pierre Boulle's *Planet of the Apes*, and Stephen Vincent Benet's story "By the Waters of Babylon"). Writers like Robert Heinlein and Ray Bradbury have written many books appropriate for students at varying levels of reading ability and sophistication, and a great many provocative and popular short films like *Ark*, *23 Skiddoo*, *Moclune*, and *Future Shock* (a documentary based on Toffler's book) are also available. Among the non-fiction works students might consider are R. Buckminster Fuller's *Utopia or Oblivion: The Prospects for Humanity* and *I Seem to Be a Verb* (the latter book written with Jerome Agel and Quentin Fiore) and Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore's *War and Peace in the Global Village*. For additional suggested works, see Bernard Hollister's annotated bibliography, "Paperbacks—Grokking the Future."<sup>22</sup>

and Sheila Schwartz's "Science Fiction: Bridge Between the Two Cultures"<sup>23</sup> Beverly Friend's "Strange Bedfellows: Science Fiction, Linguistics and Education"<sup>24</sup> suggests ways to integrate language study into the discussion of a number of science fiction novels

# 18 UTOPIAS AND NEGATIVE UTOPIAS: WHAT ARE MAN'S HOPES AND FEARS FOR THE FUTURE?

Closely related to the previous unit and to "The Good Life," this unit frees students from realities and probabilities to a greater extent and encourages them to speculate imaginatively. What would the best, or the worst, be like? What kind of social order would you have and who would be in control? How would people be educated? Would there be schools, and would they resemble the one pictured by George Leonard in *Education and Ecstacy*? Could real human beings such as you know really live in and maintain such a utopia? Aside from their own speculations, which might make up most of the unit, students could consider some of the following works from the extensive literature of utopias and negative utopias: Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Skinner's *Walden II*, Hilton's *Lost Horizon*, Orwell's *1984*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, Clarke's *Childhood's End*, Heinlein's *Stronger in a Stronger Land*, Von Negut's *Soyuz Pionov*, Ellison's *Dangerous Visions*, and Neufeld's *Sleep Two Three Four*.<sup>25</sup> For ideas on procedures and assignments see Gladys Valcourt's "A Year of Utopias,"<sup>25</sup> which describes an elective course in which students create their own utopian models.

<sup>23</sup> *English Journal* 60 (Nov. 1971) 1013-51

<sup>24</sup> *English Journal* 62 (Oct. 1973) 998-1003

<sup>25</sup> *English Journal* 60 (Feb. 1972) 234-38

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# Appendix D

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## TWENTY SAMPLE ACTIVITY CARDS FOR ENGLISH CLASSES

Activity cards and their uses are discussed briefly in Chapter 3 page 53. Commercially prepared activity cards are today increasingly available on a variety of subjects. For instance, *Theatre Game File* produced by CEMREL Inc.<sup>1</sup> consists of a box of over 200 individual and group cards which can serve as the basis for an entire course in creative dramatics or acting. James Moffett has developed an entire multi-media English program for schools using activity cards to direct students to various materials and activities in reading, writing, acting, speaking, reflecting, inventing, and investigating.<sup>2</sup> Helen C. Lee has written an English methods text which consists almost entirely of activities for prospective English teachers to do in preparing to teach,<sup>3</sup> and many of the suggested activities could be done by second or third grade school students as well.

Teachers need not depend on commercial sources for activity cards, however. They are fairly easy and even fun to make up and often the teacher-made cards prove more appealing to students than the slick professional ones. *The English Journal*, *Methods*, and *English Methods* texts provide a wealth of practical ideas which can be translated into activity cards. The following cards were among hundreds developed by two creative open classroom teachers in

---

1 10646 St. Charles Rock Road, St. Louis, Mo. 63074

2 *Interaction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972)

3 *A Humanistic Approach to Teaching Secondary School English* (New York: Merrill, 1973)

Urbana Illinois and have been used extensively and with good results in their junior high school English classes <sup>4</sup>

Make a collage with a friend on some subject you both are interested in Write a page explaining your collage and why you picked the pictures you did

Write some of the things your friends do that bother you

Use one of the following sentences as the opening for a one or two page short story

Why did it have to happen to me?

I was scared to tell my parents

I wish I hadn't said it

It was a secret between me and my father

Make a floor plan of the house you lived in five to ten years ago When you are finished turn your paper over and write half a page or more about something fun you remember doing in your house

Write what an athlete (golfer miler swimmer quarterback) is thinking while participating in his sport

Describe something or some event three different times as if you were three different people Example a football fumble described by the player who fumbled his coach and the player's worst enemy

You and a friend are walking through a department store and he or she tries to get you to steal something Write a half page or more telling what you would do

Prepare an annotated bibliography of the books you have read so far

Take notes from three different sources (books encyclopedias magazines pamphlets) on one topic and hand in your notes List the title author publisher date of publication and pages used in each source

Read in a book of your choice and write a page or more about what you are reading

Read What's New? beginning on page 57 of *The English Language* The article discusses the effects of the media on language With a group of 3 or 4 prepare a report for the class summarizing the article and illustrating the main points with ads you have seen or heard Assign members for the presentation of each topic and a member to take notes on how the group participates

<sup>4</sup> Crystal Valentine and Susan Loomis Brookens Junior High School Urbana Ill

Read or reread a book or short story of your choice and write at least a one page description of one character or a description of the place or setting of the story

Read the story 'Hours of Fear' beginning on page 74 of *Vanguard*. This is a story about the collision of two ships in the ocean. Then go to the library and find out about another famous ship that went down. Write one-half page or more about what you have discovered.

Write a dialogue between two people. Add in parentheses what each person is really thinking about the other.

Choose a partner. Then blindfold yourself for a fifteen minute period and tell your partner to write down everything you say you hear. Do this while sitting in different places in the building.

Write a children's storybook and illustrate it (draw or cut out pictures from magazines). Try to make it at least ten pages long. You might work on it with a friend and then go to a grade school and read it or show it to smaller children.

Read four newspaper editorials and write at least a half page summary of each. You might also include the opinions of columnists like Jack Anderson, Art Buchwald or William Buckley. Try to write an editorial of your own on something that bothers you.

Read a story or book and make a mobile representing some aspect of it.

Read *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and compare the gull Jonathan and the rest of the gulls to people you know. Try to find a group to do this with.

Read the sports section of the Sunday newspaper and then tell on paper why your favorite team won or lost its most recent game. Be sure to include some statistics and key plays.

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